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THE "ROPE TRICK" PHOTOGRAPHED

The above photograph, taken on Roborough Down, Plymouth, by J. Lewis, a photographer on the staff of the "Western Morning News," shows "Karachi," at present living in Plymouth, giving an exhibition of the celebrated "rope trick" assisted by his son. The issue of the "Western Morning News" in which the picture was published contained also a declaration by the photographer that the photographs were perfectly genuine and that he himself examined the rope which was used See P. 121

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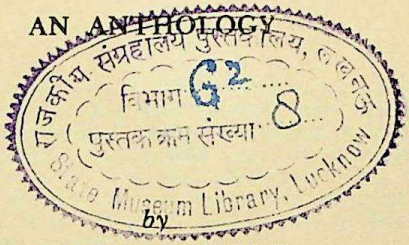
MYSTICS & MAGICIANS OF INDIA

AN ANTHOLOGY



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PREFACE

. . . . We assert nothing positively with regard to most of the facts which we are about to relate. The skill derived from long experience, charlatanism, and even hallucination itself, may assist to explain them. We are bound to say, however, as impartial and faithful observers, that though we applied the severest tests, to which the Fakirs and other initiates interposed no objection whatever, we never succeeded in detecting a single case of fraud or trickery, which, we admit, is far from being a conclusive proof of their honesty. . . .

We occupy the position . . . . of a simple recorder of facts which some regard as occult manifestations and others as skilful jugglery.

There are, however, some phenomena, which, without going too far, we are inclined to attribute to natural forces, the laws of which have not yet been ascertained. . . .

In short, with regard to certain physical facts, which have nothing in common with supernatural evocations, apparitions, or manifestations, and which are not in direct opposition to the laws of nature, which are not more wonderful than the results produced by electricity, we think that a denial or affirmation following a thorough and scientific investigation, is better than a denial or affirmation *a priori.*

We know what a denial *a priori* is worth. It once rejected steam and electricity.

The phenomena which we shall describe are all included within the three following categories :

First, facts and phenomena of exterior manifestations, obtained by spiritual force, and generally with the aid of material objects.

Second, facts of a magnetic or somnambulistic character.

Third, the phenomena of evocation and apparition, and the production of material objects by the spirits.—Louis Jacolliot in "Occult Sciences in India."

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PUBLISHERS' NOTE

The first eight chapters of this book are reprints from the Fourth Part of the "Occult Science in India and Among the Ancients with an Account of their Mystic Initiations and the History of Spiritism" by Louis Jacolliot, formerly Chief Justice of Chandernagore. It was translated from the French by William L. Felt and published in 1884. It is a record of "exterior phenomena and manifestations by which the Hindus claim to share that they are in possession of occult power which is a logical sequence of their religious belief in the part played by spirits in the universe."

The subsequent chapters are records of magic, illusions, conjuring tricks, jugglery, snake-charming, worship of the *Bhutas* or malevolent fiends, human hybernation and many other curious and strange feats performed from time to time by Indian mystics, magicians, prestidegitators and Faquirs since the fourteenth century to the present day. Some of them are reprinted from the works of well-known historians and travellers and a few articles published in newspapers.

The two different versions about the famous Yogi Haridas's power of hybernation are drawn respectively from *The Court and Camp of Runjeet Singh* by W. G. Osborne, London, 1838, and *Thirty-five Years in the East* by J. M. Honigberger, London, 1858.

An article on that mysterious Indian Rope Trick written by the famous Indian Magician P. C. Sorcar is published in the Appendix.

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CHAPTER I

THE BRONZE VASE—MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS[1]

Leaving Chandernagore (in Bengal) on January 3, 1866, in a *dinghi,* which is a sort of boat peculiar to that country, provided with a small cabin, I arrived at Banaras, the Holy City, a fortnight afterward.

Two Indian servants accompanied me, a valet-de chambre, and a *metor,* whose duty it was to prepare my meals.

The crew consisted of a head boatman, and six rowers, belonging to the caste of fishermen.

Shortly before sunset one evening we were lying off the staircase of ghat near the celebrated temple of Siva. It is impossible to describe the spectacle that met my eyes.

"Few cities," says E Roberts, "no matter how magnificent, are so grand and imposing in appearance as Banaras."

When the watchful traveller ascends the Ganges his approach to the great city is first announced by the appearance of the minarets, whose towers, rising above the heavy masses of the surrounding palaces, are scattered in an apparently disorderly, though picturesque manner, along the crooked banks of the river, for about a couple of leagues.

It is impossible to resist the impression made by the magnificent panorama presented by such a multitude of temples, towers, long arcades supported by columns, elevated quays, and terraces whose balustrades stand out in strong relief, amid the luxuriant foliage of baobab, tamarind, and banana trees; and which, covered here and there with clusters of flowers of various shades, appearing among the heavily carved buildings, rise majestically above gardens, beautifully situated among spacious courts.

The absence of any regular plan, the different styles of architecture, the mingling of the austere and solemn with the

Chapters I—VIII of this book are reprints of extracts from "Mystics and Magicians of India" by Louis Jacolliot.

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light and fantastic, give an odd appearance to some parts of the scene, but its effect as a whole is magnificent, and most of the details possess a beauty of which it is impossible to give any conception.

The ghats, which are a sort of monument composed of four columns united by a single cornice, and which are situated at the top of the gigantic stairs, whose bottom steps are bathed in the waters of the Ganges, are the only quays possessed by the old city, which was the ancient Kasi of the earliest rajas. From the rising to the setting of the sun they are covered by coolies loading and unloading the small vessels that traverse the Ganges in every direction, bringing to market in upper Bengal all the merchandise of India and Asia.

As I ordered the head boatman to moor the boat to the ghat of Siva a circumstance struck me with astonishment. The Hindus and Musalmans who, time out of mind, have been so deeply divided by their old enmity toward each other in the south of India, where they are an insignificant minority of the whole population, were performing their ablutions together promiscuously at the feet of the ghat of Banaras.

Though the followers of the Prophet have always fought against idolatry with fire and sword, until the reign of Aurangzeb, they always respected the sacred city of their conquered foe, which seemed to inspire them with a mysterious terror.

The Hindus claimed that Banaras had been built by Siva, in order to serve as an asylum to the righteous, when the earth should be overrun by crime and sorrow; and that it would never experience any of those vicissitudes to which all earthly things are subject.

Aurangzeb, to humiliate their pride, destroyed one of their oldest and most venerable temples, and erected in its stead the splendid mosque that bears his name, whose slender spires, covered with leaves of gold, inform travellers that the city is at hand, long before they can see it. To-day, numerous Musalman temples rise by the side of Hindu temples, and the Brahmins witness, without being able to prevent it, but with

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horror that they are powerless to conceal, the slaughter of cattle for sacrificial or culinary purposes in the holy city, which had been polluted by the killing of animal since the Moghul invasion.

In spite of the vandalism which has destroyed some of the oldest and handsomest monuments in India, and although in other countries subject to their laws the Musalmans have used every means and shrunk from nothing in order to convert the Hindus to the faith of the Prophet, the Moghul sovereigns always used the largest tolerance at Banaras for the religious beliefs, manners, and usages of their conquered foe. It is for this reason, no doubt, that the two nations are on the best of terms in this part of India. However, until I had seen it I would never have believed that the Musalmans and Hindus would ever consent to perform their religious ablutions in the same place.

In the south of India, a Musalman who should bathe in the sacred tank of a temple would be put to death on the spot.

When I arrived at Banaras, I intended to remain there a couple of months. That was by no means too long a stay, in view of the inquiries I desired to make regarding the antiquities of the country, but it was too long to put up at a hotel or bungalow. I therefore determined to hire a house of my own and to go to housekeeping at once. To have a home of one's own in the East, and especially in the far East, is almost one of the first necessaries of life.

I was about sending my servant upon a voyage of discovery, when the Peishwa, a Mahratta prince at Banaras with whom I had become acquainted through the Raja at Chandernagore, hearing of my arrival, sent to offer me apartments in the magnificent seven storied palace owned by him upon the banks of the Ganges, to the left of the celebrated mosque of Aurangzeb.

It is no uncommon thing for the princes and rajas of Hindusthan, although they often reside at a great distance from Banaras, to build houses in that city, to which they

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resort during the festivities incident to the celebration of their birthday, and to which they retire in the evening of life, when, weary of the world, they desire to end their days, according to the laws of Manu, in the observance of their religious duties and in the practice of austerity.

According to their religious belief, those who die in the Holy City are not obliged to go through any further transformations, but their souls immediately ascend to the abode of Brahma and are absorbed in the great soul.

Numerous pilgrims daily arrive from all parts of India, who come to perform, either on their own account, or on behalf of wealthy persons who employ and pay them for that purpose, devotional exercises, upon the banks of the sacred river, whose waters are nowhere else considered so propitious as at the feet of the Holy City.

Some bring the bones of Rajas or other distinguished personages, whose families are able to afford the expense, which are collected after being burnt upon the funeral pyre *in little bags* which they are instructed to throw into the Ganges. The supreme hope of the Hindu is to die upon the banks of that river, or to transport his remains thither.

To this latter belief I was indebted, during my stay at Banaras, for a meeting with the most extraordinary Fakir, perhaps, that I had ever encountered in India. He came from Trivandrum, near Cape Comorin, in the extreme south of Hindusthan, and his mission was to take charge of the remains of a rich Malabar, belonging to the caste of *commoutys* (merchants). The Peishwa, whose family was originally from the South, and who was in the habit of extending hospitality to pilgrims from Travancore, Mysore, Tanjore, and the old Mahratta country, in the buildings attached to his palace, had found lodgings for him in a small thatched cottage upon the very banks of the river in which he had to perform his ablutions, for the next three weeks, in honor of the dead. He had been there a fortnight already before I heard of his arrival. His name was Govindaswamy.

After assuring myself of his consent, I had him brought

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to my apartment one day, at about noon, when the other occupants of the palace, on account of the extreme heat, were indulging in their noonday siesta.

The room in which I received him looked out upon the terrace, which in turn overlooked the Ganges, and was protected against the burning sun, by a movable tent made from woven fibres of vetivert. In the middle of the terrace there was a water-spout which fell in a fine shower into a marble basin and diffused a most delightful coolness.

I asked the Sanyasi if he wished to occupy any particular place, rather than another.

"As you please," he answered.

I asked him to go out upon the terrace, which was much lighter than the room, and where I would have a better opportunity to watch him.

"Will you allow me to put to you a single question?" said I, when he had assumed a squatting position upon the ground.

"I am listening to you."

"Do you know whether any power is developed in you, when you perform these phenomena? Did you ever feel any change take place in your brain or any of your muscles?"

"It is not a natural force that acts. I am but an instrument. I evoke the ancestral spirits, and it is they who manifest their power."

I have questioned a multitude of Sanyasis in relation to this matter, and they have nearly all made the same answer. They look upon themselves only as intermediaries between this world and the invisible spirits. Observing that he entertained the same belief, I dropped the subject in order that Govindaswamy might go on with his performances. The Sanyasi was already in position with both hands extended toward an immense bronze vase full of water. Within five minutes the vase commenced to rock to and fro upon its base, and approach the Sanyasi gently and with a regular motion. As the distance diminished, metallic sounds escaped from it, as if some one had struck it with a steel rod. At certain times

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the blows were so numerous and quick that they produced a sound similar to that made by a hail-storm upon a metal roof.

I asked Govindaswamy if I could give directions, and he consented without hesitation.

The vase, which was still under the performer's influence, advanced, receded, or stood still, according to my request.

At one time, at my command, the blows changed into a continuous roll like that of a drum; at another, on the contrary, they succeeded each other with the slowness and regularity of the ticking of a clock.

I asked to have the blows struck only every ten seconds, and I compared them with the progress of the second hand upon the face of my watch.

Then loud, sharp strokes were heard, for a minute and two-thirds.

Upon the table of the drawing-room attached to my apartments, stood one of those music-boxes of which the Hindus are so fond, and which the Peishwa had no doubt procured from Calcutta. I had it brought out upon the terrace by my servant, and I asked to have the blows struck upon the vase so as to accompany any air which the instrument might perform.

I then wound up the box in the usual way, and pressed the spring of the clock-work, without knowing what air it would play. A regular whirlwind of notes was the result, and the box played, in time designedly accelerated, no doubt, the tune of "Robin of the Wood."

I listened in the direction of the vase, and quick, sharp strokes accompanied the tune, with the regularity of the baton of an orchestra leader. The air had scarcely finished when I again pressed the spring, and the blows moderated their pace to keep time to the march from the *Prophete*, which they accompanied exactly.

All this was done without fuss, or parade, or mystery of any kind, upon a terrace of a few yards square. The vase thus put in motion, could hardly, when empty, have been moved by two men. It was hollowed out like a cup, and was so situated as to receive the falling jet of wáter from the fountain

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before spoken of. It was used for the morning ablutions, which, in India, are almost equal to a regular bath.

What was the force that moved this mass?—that is the question.

I repeated these various experiments a second time, and they were renewed with like order and regularity.

The Sanyasi, who had neither changed his position, nor left his place, then stood up, and rested the tips of his fingers, for a short time, upon the edge of the vase. It soon began to rock to and fro in regular time, from left to right, gradually accelerating its speed; its base, which rose and fell alternately on either side, made no sound upon the stuccoed pavement.

But what surprised me most was to see that the water remained stationary in the vase, as if there were a strong pressure that prevented its regaining its equilibrium, which the motion of the vessel containing it had disturbed.

Three times during these oscillations the vase rose a distance of seven to eight inches completely from the ground, and, when it fell to the pavement again, it did so without any perceptible shock.

The performance had already lasted several hours, during which I had taken copious and careful notes, and had also taken the precaution to have each phenomenon repeated in a different manner, when the sun, which was sinking below the horizon, warned us that it was time for me to commence my usual excursion among the venerable monuments and ruins of ancient Kasi, which was the centre of the religious power of the Brahmins when, after their contest with the rajas, they had lost their temporal power—as well as for the Sanyasi to prepare himself in the temple of Siva, by the usual prayers, for the ablutions and funeral ceremonies which he was obliged to perform every evening, upon the banks of the sacred river.

Upon taking his departure the Sanyasi promised to return every day, at the same hour, as long as he should remain at Banaras.

The poor man was very glad to have met me. I had resided for many years in the south of India, and knew the

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beautiful and sonorous language of the country of Dravida,[1] which no one else understood at Banaras. He had now some one to talk to about this wonderful land and its ancient ruins, its old temples and their incomparable vegetation, and its manuscripts, written with a pointed stick centuries before the sea had abandoned the salt deserts of Iran and Chaldea, or the mud deposits of the Nile had joined Lower Egypt to the plains of Memphis and Thebes.

CHAPTER II

THE WATER-SPOUT—THE MAGIC STICK

Govindaswamy was punctual in the performance of his engagement.

Gazing at the extraordinary flood of light which the sun poured upon the surface of the Ganges as it rolled by, I stood absorbed in silent contemplation of the magnificent spectacle before me, when the Sanyasi, lifting one of the curtains which hung before the door leading into the verandah, walked in and sat upon the floor with his legs bent under him after the Hindu manner.

"Salam bere" (good day, sahib), said he, using his mother tongue.

"Salam tambi" (good day, friend), replied I, in the same idiom, " is the rice here equal to the rice of Tanjore?"

"The rice served to me in the Peishwa's palace at Banaras is not equal to that which I gather about my hut at Trivandrum."

"What is the matter with it? is not the curry seed as pure upon the banks of the Ganges as upon the Malabar coast?"

"Listen! the cocoa-tree does not grow here and the water of the sacred river cannot take the place of the salt water. I am a man of the coast, as there is a tree of the coast, and we both of us die when we are separated from the ocean."

[1] *The Tamoul.*

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Just then a slight southern breeze like escaping steam swept in warm gusts over the drowsy city slumbering in the noon-day heat. His eyes glistened.

"It comes from my old home," said he, "do you not feel it? it brings to my mind so many recollections."

He sat a long while, thinking, no doubt, of the wide, gloomy forests on the Malabar coast, where he had passed his childhood, and of the mysterious caves of the temple at Trivandrum, where the Brahmins had instructed him in the art of evocation.

Suddenly he arose and walked toward the bronze vase which he had used the day before for the purpose of exhibiting his power. He imposed his hands upon the surface of the water which filled it to the very edge, but he did not touch it, however, and stood motionless in that position. As yet I had no idea of the phenomena that he intended to perform.

I do not know that he experienced any unusual difficulty on that day, but an hour had elapsed before either the water or the vase exhibited any evidence whatever of action on his part.

I had begun to despair of obtaining any result on that occasion, when the water began to be gently agitated. It looked as though its surface were ruffled by a slight breeze. Placing my hands upon the edge of the vase I experienced a slight feeling of coolness, which apparently arose from the same cause. A rose-leaf, thrown into the water, soon was blown or drifted against the other edge.

Meanwhile he stood motionless. His mouth was closed, and, strange to say, though it effectually disposed of any idea of trickery on his part, the waves were formed on the opposite side from that of the performer and gently broke against the edge of the vase on his side.

Gradually the motion of the waves became more violent. They made their appearance in every direction, as though the water were in a state of intense ebullition under the influence of a great heat. It soon rose higher than his hands, and

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several waves rose to a height of one or two feet from the surface.

I asked Govindaswamy to take his hands away. Upon their removal the motion of the water gradually abated, without ceasing altogether, as in the case of boiling water from which the fire has been removed. On the other hand, whenever he placed his hands in their former position, the motion of the water was as great as ever.

The last portion of the seance was still more extraordinary.

The Hindu asked me to lend him a small stick. I handed him a wooden lead-pencil that had never been sharpened. He placed it in the water, and in a few minutes, by the imposition of his hands, he made it move in every direction, like a magnet in contact with an iron bar.

Placing his forefinger gently upon the middle of the pencil, so as not to affect its position upon the water, in a few minutes I saw the small piece of wood slowly descend beneath the surface, until it had reached the bottom of the vase.

Laying aside the question of skill or deception on the performer's part, without doing which it is impossible for me to make any positive statement either one way or the other, although under the circumstances it would have been extremely difficult for any attempt at imposture to have escaped my attention, it occurred to me that the Sanyasi, upon charging the small piece of wood with fluid, might perhaps have increased its weight, so as to make it heavier than water.

Though deeply sceptical with regard to spirits, I often wondered, whenever I saw an experiment of this kind, whether or not some natural force had not been brought into play, with which we were totally unacquainted.

I merely state the facts without further comment.

CHAPTER III

PHENOMENA OF ELEVATION AND KNOCKING

The Sanyasi's third visit was short, as he was to pass the night in prayer upon the banks of the sacred river, upon the

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occasion of a religious festival, and he had been invited to a funeral *sraddha,* which was to take place on the following day.

He came merely to inform me that he would be obliged to attend them, and was preparing to return to the small hut that the Peishwa had given him the use of, when, at my request, he consented to perform a phenomenon of elevation, which I had already seen other performers successfully accomplish, without, however, taking any particular notice of how they did it.

Taking an ironwood cane which I had brought from Ceylon, he leaned heavily upon it, resting his right hand upon the handle, with his eyes fixed upon the ground. He then proceeded to utter the appropriate incantations, which he had forgotten to favour me with the day previous.

From the elaborate preparation he made in my presence, I formed the opinion that this was to be only another instance of what I had always regarded as an acrobatic trick.

My judgment refuses, in fact, to attach any other name to such phenomena as this:

Leaning upon the cane with one hand, the Sanyasi rose gradually about two feet from the ground. His legs were crossed beneath him, and he made no change in his position, which was very like that of those bronze statues of Buddha that all tourists bring from the Far East, without a suspicion that most of them come originally from English foundries.

For more than twenty minutes I tried to see how Govindaswamy could thus fly in the face and eyes of all the known laws of gravity; it was entirely beyond my comprehension; the stick gave him no visible support, and there was no apparent contact between that and his body, except through his right hand.

When I dismissed him he informed me, upon leaving, that when the sacred elephants should strike the hour of midnight upon the copper gong in the temple of Siva, he would evoke the familiar spirits that protect the French, who

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would then manifest their presence in some manner in my bedroom.

The Hindus have a perfect understanding among themselves. In order to prevent any too obvious fraud, I sent my two servants to pass the night upon the dinghi with the boatmen. The idea of the supernatural was naturally repugnant to my mind. My leanings were all the other way, but if the fact should occur as he predicted, I did not want to be too easily duped. For that reason I prepared to throw every obstacle in the Sanyasi's way.

The Peishwa's house was singularly constructed; all the windows overlooked the Ganges, and it contained seven large apartments, one above the other. All the rooms in each apartment opened upon covered galleries or terraces projecting over the quay. The mode of communication from one story to another was very curious. There was a single flight of steps which led from the bottom apartment to that immediately above. Upon crossing this second apartment, in the last room was a second flight of stairs which had no communication with the former, and which led to the story above, and so on up to the seventh story, which was reached by means of a movable stairway which could be raised by chains like a drawbridge.

It was this seventh story, which was furnished in a style partly Oriental and partly European, which commanded a most splendid view and where the air was the coolest, that the Peishwa had set apart for his foreign guests.

As soon as it was dark, I examined all the different rooms in the apartment, in the most careful manner, and made sure that nobody was concealed in them. I then raised the drawbridge, and thus cut off all communication from the outside.

At the hour named I thought I heard two blows distinctly struck against the wall of my room. I walked toward the spot from which the sound seemed to come, when my steps were suddenly arrested by a sharp blow, which appeared to proceed from the glass shade that protected the hanging lamp against gnats and night butterflies. A few more sounds were heard at unequal intervals in the cedar rafters of the ceiling, and that

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was all. I walked toward the end of the terrace. It was one of those silvery nights, unknown in our more foggy lands. The vast flood of the sacred river rolled silently along at the foot of the sleeping city, upon one of whose steps the outlines of a human form were dimly profiled. It was the Sanyasi of Trivandrum, praying for the repose of his dead.

CHAPTER IV

THE BAMBOO STOOL—AERIAL FLOWERS—THE MYSTERIOUS PUNKHA

I spent a part of the night in reflection upon this subject, but I was not able to solve the riddle. Since I had lived in India I had often seen similar phenomena performed in my presence by others and I was able to bring a multitude of other facts quite as wonderful to the support of what was said and done by the Sanyasi of Trivandrum, but they did not prove, in my opinion, the truth of the theory with regard to the evocation of the ancestral shades. What I beg to direct the reader's attention to, more particularly because it is strictly true, is the fact that the means employed to produce these phenomena are not known to any person in India except the performers themselves.

I was impatiently expecting the Sanyasi's arrival, for I had long intended to accompany my investigations into the ancient doctrine regarding the Pitris with an inquiry into the material phenomena inseparably connected, in the Hindu mind, with their religious convictions. The willingness, added to the skill, of Govindaswamy gave me an opportunity that might not soon occur again of reviewing these singular facts, which seem to have occupied the minds of the sacerdotal classes in ancient times in all their leisure moments, and which had been repeated in my presence more than a hundred times before. I spent a portion of the day in visiting the temples and mosques of Banaras, and I did not return to the palace until sunset.

It was night, and I was waiting for the Sanyasi upon the

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terrace when he walked quietly in. People of that class have the privilege of entering the presence of the highest personages in Hindusthan at any time, without previous announcement, and although they seldom make use of the privilege in the case of Europeans, I had, in the beginning of our acquaintance, allowed Govindaswamy to do as he pleased. This, added to my knowledge of his mother tongue, had made him very friendly.

"Well," said I, "as soon as I perceived his entrance, "the sounds were heard as you predicted; the Sanyasi is very skilful."

"The Sanyasi is nothing," he answered, with the utmost coolness. "He utters the proper mantrams and the spirits hear them. It was the ancestral shades of the French who paid him a visit."

"Have you power over the spirits of foreigners?"

"No one has power over the spirits."

"I did not express myself properly. How does it happen that the souls of the French should grant the requests of a Hindu? They do not belong to your caste."

"There are no castes in the superior world."

"Then it was my ancestors who appeared last night?"

"You have said it."

Such was his invariable answer.

Whenever I questioned him upon this subject I carefully watched the expression of his face, to see if I could detect in his looks a smile or any other sign of incredulity, but he seemed to be sincere, and his face was calm and impenetrable.

Without being asked to do so, he then went on with his performances.

Taking a small bamboo stool that stood near, he sat down upon it in the Musalman style with his legs crossed beneath him, and his arms folded across his chest.

According to my instructions to my servant, the terrace had been lighted *a giorno*, and I had made such preparations that nothing that occurred could possibly escape my attention.

As in my accounts of previous performances, I omit all the elaborate preparations by which they were accompanied, and

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the impression made upon my own mind, and confine myself strictly to what is essential.

At the end of a few minutes, during which he appeared to concentrate his attention upon the bamboo stool upon which he was sitting, it began to move noiselessly along the floor, by short jerks which made it advance about three or four inches every time. I watched the Hindu attentively, but he was as still and motionless as a statue.

The terrace was about seven yards long and as many wide. It took about ten minutes to traverse the whole distance, and when the stool had arrived at the end it began to move backward until it returned to its starting-place. The performance was repeated three times, and always successfully, unless the conditions were changed. I ought to say, however, that the Sanyasi's legs, which were crossed beneath him, were distant from the ground the whole height of the stool.

During the whole day the heat had been overpowering. The night breeze which springs up so regularly in those latitudes to cool the heated lungs, and which blows from the Himalaya Mountains, had not yet risen. The *metor* was moving, as fast as he could, by the aid of a rope of cocoa fibre above our heads, an enormous PUNKHA, hanging from ironrods in the middle of the terrace, which also supported horizontally the vetivert curtains and surrounding matting.

The PUNKHA is a sort of moveable fan of rectangular from, which is fastened at both ends to the ceiling of the room. Set in motion by a servant specially engaged for that purpose, it imparts a factitious, though very agreeable, coolness to the atmosphere. The Sanyasi made use of this instrument for the performance of the second phenomenon.

Taking the PUNKHA rope from the METOR'S hands, he pressed it against his forehead with both hands, and sat down in a squatting position beneath the PUNKHA, which soon began to move slowly over our heads, though Govindaswamy had not made the slightest motion. It gradually increased its speed until it moved at a very rapid rate, as though it were driven by some invisible hand.

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When the Sanyasi let go of the rope it continued to move, though at a gradually diminishing rate, and finally stopped altogether.

These two phenomena were repeated several times, and it was now quite late at night, but the Sanyasi was in a good humour, and before leaving he determined to give me another proof of his power.

Three vases of flowers, so heavy that none but a strong man could have lifted them (and then he could not have done so without an effort), stood at one end of the terrace. Selecting one, he imposed his hands upon it so as to touch the edge of the vase with the tips of his fingers. Without any apparent effort on his part it began to move to and fro upon its base as regularly as the pendulum of a clock. It soon seemed to me that the vase had left the floor, without changing its movement in the least degree, and it appeared to me to be floating in the air, going from right to left at the will of the Sanyasi.

I do not, it will be observed, speak of this phenomenon in positive terms, for I have always regarded it as caused by an illusion of the senses. To be candid, I must acknowledge that I have always been somewhat sceptical with regard to the phenomena performed by the Sanyasi, but that especially, though I had often seen it performed under circumstances that seemed to render deception impossible, always appeared to me so strange that I was unable to resist the belief that some imposition, however elaborate or skilful, was being practised upon me.

CHAPTER V

THE STATIONARY TABLE—A SHOWER OF KNOCKS

Govindaswamy had only three days more to stay at Banaras. I determined to devote our last meeting to experiments in *magnetism and somnambulism*. When I informed him of any intention he seemed to be surprised by these novel expressions, though I translated them as well as I could into the Tamil language.

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When I had made him understand the meaning attached to those words in Europe, he smiled and answered, in his usual way, that such phenomena were also produced by the Pitris, in addition to those I had already witnessed. It was not possible to hold any discussion with him upon that point. Without regard to his religious opinions, or to the causes to which he attributed his power, I merely asked him if he was willing to take part in experiments of that character.

"The Frenchman," he answered, "has spoken to the Sanyasi in his native language. The Sanyasi can refuse him nothing."

Seeing that his reply was so satisfactory in this respect, I was encouraged to make another request.

"Will you allow me to-day," said I, "to indicate the phenomena that I wish you to perform, instead of leaving them to you?"

Although it seems highly improbable, in view of the peculiar circumstances of their occurrence, that the Sanyasi should have made any preparations in advance for the performances which I have already described, or should have had any previous understanding with the servants, I was anxious, however, to ascertain whether Govindaswamy would be able to produce any manifestations that he had no previous notice of.

"I will do as you please," said the Hindu, simply. This plan however, met the fate of many others. I spent so much time, and took so deep an interest in the Sanyasi's manifestations of spiritual force, that I had no opportunity to investigate the subject of his magnetic power.

I had often seen the performing Sanyasi attach different objects to the ground, either, according to the explanation given me by an English major who had devoted much time and thought to questions of this class, by charging them with fluid in order to augment their specific gravity or in some other manner unknown to me. I determined to repeat the experiment. Taking a small stand of teak wood which I could lift without any effort with my thumb and forefinger,

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I placed it in the middle of the terrace, and asked the Sanyasi if he could not fix it there so that it could not be moved.

The Sanyasi, without the slightest hesitation, walked toward the small piece of furniture, and imposing both hands upon the top stood motionless in that position for nearly a quarter of an hour, at the end of which time he said to me, smiling:

The spirits have come and nobody can remove the table without their permission.

Feeling somewhat incredulous, I approached the table and took hold of it, as though I were going to lift it. It would not stir from the ground any more than if it had been sealed. I struggled harder, with the result that the fragile leaf there fastened came off in my hands.

I then took hold of the legs, which were united by a cross brace and which remained standing, but the result was the same. A thought then crossed my mind.

Suppose, thought I, that these phenomena are produced by the Sanyasi's charging objects with some kind of fluid, and that a natural force is thus developed the laws of which we are as yet ignorant of, the supply of fluid with which they are charged must gradually lose its efficacy unless renewed by the operator, and in that case I shall soon be able to remove what is left of the table without any difficulty.

I asked the Sanyasi to go to the other end of the terrace, which he did with the utmost good humour imaginable. At the end of a few minutes I was able to handle the stand without any trouble whatever. It was evident, therefore, that there was a force of some kind or other; there was no other alternative unless I was willing to admit that I had been egregiously imposed upon, which would have been impossible, under the circumstances.

I should have had to devote some months to this experiment alone, if I had desired to test it scientifically. I had not sufficient time at my disposal to do so, and I merely describe it now, like all the rest, without expressing an opinion

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either one way or the other, as to means employed or the cause thereof.

"The Pitris have departed," said the Hindu, in explanation, "because their means of terrestrial communication was broken. Listen! they are coming back again."

As he uttered these words, he imposed his hands above one of those immense copper platters inlaid with silver such as are used by wealthy Indians for dice playing, and almost immediately there ensued such a rapid and violent succession of blows or knocks that it might have been taken for a hail-shower upon a metal roof, and I thought I saw (the reader will observe that I do not express myself positively in this respect) a succession of phosphorescent lights (plain enough to be visible in broad daylight) pass to and fro across the platter in every direction.

This phenomenon ceased or was repeated at the Sanyasi's pleasure.

I have already remarked that the apartments I occupied at the Peishwa's were furnished partly in the European and partly in the Oriental style. There was a multitude of fancy articles upon the etageres, such as windmills setting blacksmiths in motion, tin soldiers, and wooden houses from Nuremberg with those everlasting little green fir trees, from which many children obtain their earliest ideas of nature. The furniture was all cluttered up with objects of this nature; the most childish articles were mingled pell-mell with the most artistic, according to the fancies of the Indian servants. We need not laugh, however; a native of those countries could not look at three-quarters of the Chinese, Hindu, or Oceanic objects with which we proudly and ostentatiously decorate our dwellings, and keep a sober face. I bethought myself of a small mill which might be moved by a breath, which set several personages in motion. I pointed it out to Govindaswamy and asked him if he could make it go without touching it.

In consequence of the imposition of his hands alone he set the mill in motion with great rapidity, at a rate which increased or diminished according to the distance at which the Sanyasi stood.

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This was a very simple fact, but yet it made a great impression upon my mind, by reason of the improbability of any previous notice or preparation.

The following is another of the same character, but much more surprising.

Among the objects that composed the Peishwa's museum was a harmoniflute. By the aid of a small cord tied around the wooden square forming a portion of the bellows (a part of the instrument which, as everybody knows, is on the side opposite to that of the keys) I hung it from one of the iron bars of the terrace, in such a way that it swung in the air at about two feet from the ground, and I asked the Sanyasi if he could make it play without touching it.

Complying unhesitatingly with my request, he seized the cord by which the harmoniflute was suspended, between the thumb and forefinger of each hand and stood perfectly motionless and still. The harmoniflute soon began to be gently stirred, the bellows underwent an alternate movement of contraction and inflation, as though proceeding from some invisible hand, and the instrument emitted sounds which were perfectly plain and distinct, though of unusual length and not very harmonious it is true.

"Cannot you get a tune?" said I to Govindaswamy.

"I will evoke the spirit of one of the old temple musicians," he answered with the greatest gravity.

I waited patiently.

The instrument had been silent a long while, not having made a sound since my request. It now began to move anew and first played a series of notes or chords like a prelude; it then bravely attacked one of the most popular airs on the Malabar coast.

Taitou moucouty conda
Aroune cany pomele, etc.

"Bring jewels for the young maiden of Aroune," etc.

As long as the piece lasted the Sanyasi stood perfectly still. He merely had hold, as I have already described, of the cord by which he was in communication with the harmoniflute.

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Wishing to apply every test in my power, I kneeled down in order to observe the various movements of the instrument, and I saw, so that I am positively sure of what I say, unless I was misled by an illusion of the senses, the upward and downward motion of the keys, according to the requirements of the tune.

As before, I merely state the fact, and leave the reader to draw his own conclusions.

Suppose that there was *illusion of the senses* and no *imposture* used in the production of these manifestations—shall we, in that case, investigate their laws?

No! says the French scientists, who occupy an official station, *a priori* such folly is not worthy of an investigation.

Yes! answer the scientists of England, who are not less dignified, we have ascertained material facts, which are free from the suspicion of *illusion or imposture*. We are bound in honour to ascertain their laws and proclaim the truth.

Such is the state of the question.

On the one hand, negation under any circumstances; on the other, further investigation.

Our French *savants—to call them by the name which they use among themselves*—have never lost sight, as we see, of the traditions which have led to the rejection of all the great inventions by which the present century has been distinguished.

I have not taken a very active part in the discussion and that for an obvious reason. Anybody might say to me, if I attempted to formulate a law governing the facts which have came under my own observation:

Have you experimented scientifically regarding all the extraordinary facts described as having been performed by the Sanyasis?

As I have had manufactured under my own supervision neither the weights nor scales nor vases nor tables nor any of the instruments used by the Sanyasis, to this question I am bound to answer—*scientifically* no!

But, on the other hand, when I see the Sanyasis often using articles belonging to myself and most frequently things

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which, in all probability, they had never seen or touched before, I say with Crookes, Huggins, Cox, and others—here are the facts for your investigation, science should know the grounds upon which they rest before rejecting or accepting them.

At sunset Govindaswamy was to perform his devotions upon the banks of the sacred river. It was near that hour now, and upon taking leave of me with the usual salutations he informed me that he could not come the next day.

As I expressed my regret, he answered me:

"To-morrow will be the twenty-first day since my arrival at Banaras, and the mortuary ceremonies will then be concluded." The Sanyasi was to remain at prayer from one sunrise to another—a priod of twenty-four hours. When his task was accomplished, and previous to his departure for Trivandrum, he promised to give me an entire day and night, for, said he, "you have been very kind, and with you I could speak the language that my old *ama* (mother) used to speak when she rocked me to sleep in a banana leaf. My mouth has long been closed." He often recurred to this subject, and always seemed much moved when he spoke of it.

I have never known a Hindu to speak of his mother without emotion.

As he was about stepping across the threshold of the terrace door he noticed a vase containing various feathers, taken from the most wonderful birds in India. He took up a handful, which he threw above his head high in the air. The feathers of course descended again soon, but the Sanyasi made passes beneath them as they fell, and whenever one came near him, it turned around quickly and ascended again with a spiral movement, until stopped by the vetivert carpet, which answered the purpose of a moveable roof. They all went in the same direction, but after a moment, in obedience to the laws of gravity, they dropped again, but before they had travelled half the distance to the ground they resumed their ascending movement and were stopped as before by the matting, where they remained.

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A final tremor was followed by a slight manifestation of downward tendency, but the feathers soon remained stationary. If any one had seen them standing out in sharp relief against the golden background of the straw matting, in brilliant and decided colours of every possible shade, he would have said that they were placed there by the pencil of some accomplished artist.

As soon as the Sanyasi had disappeared they fell flat to the ground. I left them a long while as they lay strewn upon the floor, as a proof, of which I felt the need, that I had not been misled by some mental hallucination.

Night had no sooner come with its refreshing coolness, than I embarked upon the dinghi which lay at the quay, and ordered the head boat-man to let the boat drift down the river with the current. Influenced, in spite of myself, by the incomprehensible phenomena which I had just witnessed, I felt as though I wanted to change my surroundings, instead of groping my way dreamily among the metaphysical speculations of the past. I also felt the need of the pleasanter sensations always accompanying a night upon the Ganges, soothed by the song of the Hindu boatmen and the distant cry of savage beasts.

CHAPTER VI

MIND READING—THE FLYING PLAM-LEAF

Govindaswamy had promised me that before he left to return to Trivanderam he would employ all the power at his command, or, to use an expression for which he alone is responsible, *he would appeal to all the Pitris who assisted him,* and would show me something wonderful that I would never forget.

On the day in question we were to have two sittings, one in the broad light of day, like those which I have previously described, and one at night, but I was to be free to illuminate the place in which the experiments were to be held as much as I pleased.

The ghat of Siva was hardly gilded by the first rays of the

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rising sun when the Hindu, whose mission was now at an end, sent in his name by my servant. He was afraid that he would find me asleep.

"*Saranai-aya*" (greeting, sahib). said he, upon entering. To-morrow is the day of the Sanyasi's return to the land of his ancestors.

"My best wishes will accompany you," answered I.

"I hope that you will find that your abode has been respected by the evil spirits during your absence."

As usual, the Sanyasi made no attempt to continue the conversation. He immediately sat down upon the ground, after the ordinary salutation, and lost no time in beginning his performances.

He had brought with him a small bag of the finest sand, which he proceeded to empty upon the floor and level with his hand, in such a way as to form a surface of about half a square yard.

When he had done this, he asked me to sit at a table opposite him, with a sheet of paper and a pencil.

Having asked for a small piece of wood, I threw him the handle of a penholder, which he gently placed upon the bed of sand.

"Listen!" said he. "I am about to evoke the Pitris. When you see the article which you have just given me stand upright, one end only being in contact with the ground, you are at liberty to trace upon the paper any figures you please, and you will see an exact copy of them in the sand."

He then extended both hands before him horizontally, and proceeded to repeat the sacred formulas of evocation.

In a few minutes the wooden rod gradually rose as he had said, and at the same moment I proceeded to move my pencil over the sheet of paper before me, tracing the strangest figures in the world entirely at random. The piece of wood at once imitated every motion, and I saw the whimsical figures that I had been tracing appear successively in the sand.

When I stopped, the improvised pencil stopped—when I went on, it followed me.

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The Sanyasi had not changed his position, and there was no apparent contact between him and the piece of wood.

Wishing to know whether he could see, from his position, the movements of the pencil, as I drew it over the sheet of paper, which however would not have explained how he could transfer the figures without being in contact with the sand upon which they appeared, I left the table, and placing myself in an identically similar position to that of Govindaswamy, I was able to satisfy myself that it was totally impossible for him to ascertain what I was doing.

I then compared the figures with each other, and I found that they were exactly alike.

Having levelled the sand again, the Sanyasi said to me:

"Think of a word in the language of the gods"—the Sanskrit?

"Why that language particularly?" I answered.

"Because the Pitris use that immortal medium of speech more easily than any other. The impure are not allowed to use it."

I was not in the habit of disputing his religious convictions, and therefore said nothing.

The Hindu then extended his hands as before. The magic pencil began to move, and, gradually rising, wrote unhesitatingly the following word:

Pouroucha!

(The celestial generator).

That was actually the word that I had thought of.

"Think of a whole phrase," continued the Sanyasi.

"I have done so," I answered.

The pencil then wrote upon the sand the following words:

Adicete Veikountam Haris!

(Vishnu sleeps upon Mount Eikonta).

"Can the spirit by whom you are inspired give me the 243rd sloka of the fourth book of Manu?" inquired I of Govindaswamy.

I had hardly expressed the wish, when the pencil proceeded

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to gratify it, and wrote the following words one after the other, letter by letter, before my eyes:

Dharmapradanam pouroucham tapasa' hatakilvisam
paralokam nayaty acou basouanlam Kacaririnam.

The following is a translation of this remarkable stanza, which was correctly given as indicated:

"The man, the end of all whose actions is virtue, and all whose sins are wiped out by acts of piety and sacrifices, reaches the celestical mansions, radiant with light and clothed with a spiritual form."

Finally, as a last experiment, placing my hands upon a closed book containing extracts from hymns in the Rig-Veda, I asked for the first word of the fifth line of the twenty-first page. I received the following answer:

Devadatta.

(Given by a god).

Upon comparison I found it to be correct.

"Will you now put a mental question?" said the Sanyasi.

I acquiesced by a simple movement of the head, and the following word was written upon the sand:

Vasundhara.

(The Earth.)

I had asked, "Who is our common mother?"

I have no explanation or statement to make with regard to these facts.

Whether it is purely a matter of skill or whether the performers are really inspired—that is a question which I do not undertake to decide. I only describe what I have seen and assert that the circumstances under which the facts occurred are accurately related. *Materially speaking,* I do not think it possible that any fraud could have been committed.

The first part of this sitting was somewhat long. I asked the Sanyasi to discontinue his performances for a few minutes, during which I walked to the end of the terrace, whither he followed me.

It might have been ten o'clock in the forenoon.

The waters of the Ganges shone like a mirror in the bright

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light of a hot day. Upon our left lay a large garden, in the midst of which there stood a well, from which a *metor* was unconcernedly drawing water, which he poured into a bamboo pipe, which in its turn supplied a bathing-room.

Govindaswamy imposed his hands in the direction of the well, and the result was that, though the poor *metor* pulled upon the rope with all his might, it would no longer slip through the pulley.

When a Hindu meets with any impediment in his work, he at once attributes any obstacle that he cannot overcome to evil spirits, and immediately proceeds to chant all the magical incantations with which he is acquainted, for the knowledge of which he has often paid a high price.

The poor *metor,* of course, could not let slip so favourable an opportunity to use the knowledge he had obtained; but he had hardly chanted a few words in that sharp nasal tone which is so lacerating to the European ear, but which is inflicted upon it everywhere in the East, and particularly in the Far East, in the name of music, when his voice died away in his throat and he found it impossible, though he made the strangest contortions, to articulate a single word.

After looking at this curious sight for a few moments, the Sanyasi droped his hands and the *metor* recovered the use of his speech, while the rope performed its office as before.

Upon returning to the scene of our late experiments, I found the heat to be overpowering and so remarked to the Sanyasi, who did not seem to hear me, absorbed as he was apparently, in his own reflections. I had forgotten the remark that I had incidentally let drop, when one of those palm-leaf fans that Hindu servants use to cool the air in rooms where there is no punkha, flew up from the table, where it had been lying, and gently fanned my face.

I observed that, although it moved very slowly, the air was unusually cool and refreshing. At the same time, the atmosphere seemed to be filled with the melodious sounds of a human voice, which had nothing Hindu about it, which I thought I heard, like those faint songs that huntsmen on the

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mountains often hear rising from the valleys at twilight.

The palm leaf finally returned to the table and the sounds ceased. I wondered whether there had not been some illusion of my senses. As the Sanyasi was about to leave me, to go to his breakfast and obtain a few hours rest, of which he stood in urgent need, having had no food nor sleep for the last twenty-four hours, he stopped in the embrasure of the door leading from the terrace to the outside stairs, and, crossing his arms upon his chest, lifted himself up gradually, without any apparent support or assistance, to the height of about ten to twelve inches.

I was able to determine the distance exactly by means of a point of comparison which I had fixed upon during the continuance of the phenomenon. Behind the Sanyasi's back there was a silken hanging, which was used as a portiere, striped in gold and white bands of equal width. I noticed that the Sanyasi's feet were on a level with the sixth band. At the commencement of his ascension I had seized my chronometer; the entire time from the moment when the Sanyasi commenced to rise until he touched the ground again, was more than eight minutes. He remained perfectly still, at the highest point of elevation for nearly five minutes.

As Govindaswamy was making his parting salaam, I asked if he could repeat the last phenomenon whenever he pleased.

"The Sanyasi," answered he, emphatically, "can lift himself up as high as the clouds."

"What is the source of his power?" I do not know why I asked him the question, as he had already told me, more than twenty times, that he did not regard himself as anything more than an instrument in the hands of the Pitris.

He answered me with the following lines:

Swadyaye nityayoukta syat
Ambarad avatarati deva.

"He should be in constant communication with heaven, and a superior spirit should descend thereform."

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CHAPTER VII

SPONTANEOUS VEGETATION

Huc, the missionary, in his account of his travels in Tibet, gives a description of a phenomenon similar to that which I am about to relate, and which I can only look upon as a cunning trick.

I should not have mentioned it, perhaps, in the present work, but it forms an essential part, so to speak, of the stock in trade of those believers in the Pitris, who deal more particularly in external manifestations, and, as a faithful historian, I am loath to omit any of their curious practices.

Among the extraordinary claims advanced by the Sanyasis, is one that they can directly influence the growth of plants, and that they can so hasten it as to accomplish in a few hours what usually takes several months or even years.

I had already seen this phenomenon performed by itinerant magicians a number of times, but, as I had always regarded it merely as a successful fraud, I had omitted to record the circumstances under which it occurred.

Absurd as it seemed, as Govindswamy, who was really a man of remarkable power, proposed to repeat the various phenomena which I had already seen performed by others at different times, I determined to watch him so that he could do nothing which should escape my notice.

He had promised to give me two hours more of his time—from three to five—previous to the night sitting. I determined to employ them as proposed.

The Sanyasi suspected nothing, and I thought he would be highly surprised when, upon his arrival, I told him what I intended to.

"I am entirely at your service," said he, in his usual simple way.

I was somewhat disconcerted by his assurance, but I continued:

"Will you allow me to choose the earth, the vessel, and the seed, which you are to make grow before my eyes?"

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"The vessel and the seed, yes; but the earth must be taken from a nest of carias."

These little white ants, who build, for shelter, small hills, often reaching a height of nine or a dozen yards, are very common in India, and there was no difficulty, whatever, in procuring a little of the earth which they prepare very skilfully for their purpose.

I told my servant to have a flower-pot of the usual size filled with the earth required, and to bring me, at the same time, some seeds of different sorts.

The Sanyasi asked him to break the earth between a couple of stones, as it was only to be obtained in pieces, almost as hard as old building material.

It was well he did so, as that was an operation that we never could have performed in our rooms, without a great deal of trouble.

In less than a quarter of an hour my servant had returned with the articles required. I took them from his hands and dismissed him, not wishing to leave him in communication with Govindwaswamy.

To the latter I handed the flower-pot filled with a whitish earth, which must have been entirely saturated with that milky fluid, which the caria secrete and deposit upon every particle of earth, however small, which they use for building purposes.

When the Sanyasi deemed that it was in proper condition, he asked me to give him the seed that I had selected, as well as about a foot and a half of some white cloth. I chose at random a papaw seed from among those which my servant had brought, and before handing it to him, I asked him if he would allow me to mark it. Being answered in the affirmative, I made a slight cut in its outer skin. It was very much like the kernel of a gourd, except in colour, which was a deep brown. I gave it to him, with a few yards of mosquito cloth.

"I shall soon sleep the sleep of the spirits," said Govindaswamy; "you must promise me that you will neither touch me personally nor the flower-pot."

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I made the promise required.

He then planted the seed in the earth, which was now in a state of liquid mud, thrusting his seven-knotted stick—which, being a sign of his initiation, he never laid aside—into one corner of the vessel, and using it as a prop to hold up the piece of muslin which I had just given him. After hiding from sight in this manner the object upon which he was to operate, he sat down upon the floor, stretched both hands horizontally above him, and gradually fell into a deep cataleptic sleep.

I had promised that I would not touch him, and at first I could not tell whether his sleep was real or simulated; but when I saw, at the end of half an hour, that he had not stirred, I was forced to believe the evidence of my own senses. No man, however strong he might be, was able, except in that condition, to hold both his arms stretched horizontally before him for the space of even ten minutes.

An hour passed by, and no motion of the muscles indicated that he was alive. With his body almost entirely naked, his skin polished and glistening in the heat, and open and staring eyes, the Sanyasi looked like a bronze statue in a position of mystical evocation.

At first, I took my place opposite him, so that I could see everything that was going on, but he looked at me in a manner that soon became unendurable. His eyes seemed to be half dead, but they were filled at the same time with magnetic influences. At one time, everything seemed to be in a whirl, and the Sanyasi himself appeared to take part in the dance that was going on around me. In order to break loose from the effects of this hallucination of the senses, caused, no doubt, by looking at one object too attentively, I left the seat that I had been occupying, without, however, losing sight of Govindaswamy, who was as motionless as a corpse. I took a seat at the end of the terrace, alternately directing my attention to the course of the Ganges and to the Sanyasi, that I might not be exposed to too direct and steady an influence from him.

I had been waiting for a couple of hours, and the sun was

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fast sinking below the horizon, when a low sigh startled me. The Sanyasi had recovered possession of his senses.

He made signs to me to approach. Removing the muslin that hid the flower-pot, he then pointed out to me a young stalk of papaw, fresh and green, and nearly eight inches high.

Anticipating my thoughts, he thrust his fingers into the ground, which, meanwhile, had parted with nearly all of its moisture, and carefully taking up the young plant, he showed me, upon one of the two cuticles still adhering to the roots, the cut that I had made two hours previously.

Was it the same seed and the same cut? I have only one answer to make. I noticed no substitution. The Sanyasi had not left the terrace; I had not lost sight of him. When he came, he did not know what I was going to ask. It was impossible for him to conceal a plant in his clothes, as he was almost entirely naked, and, at any rate, he could not have told, in advance, that I would select a papaw seed, among thirty different kinds that my servant had brought.

As may be imagined, I can state nothing more positively regarding a fact of this nature. There are cases where reason refuses its assent, even in view of phenomena that can only be accounted for upon the supposition of delusion, though there is no evidence to that effect.

After enjoying my surprise for a few moments, the Sanyasi said to me, with an ill-concealed movement of pride:

"If I had continued my evocations longer, the papaw tree would have borne flowers in eight days, and fruit in fifteen.

Bearing in mind the accounts of Huc, the missionary, as well as various other phenomena of the same character which I had myself witnessed in the Karnatic, I said in reply that there were other performers who accomplished the same results in two hours.

"Your are mistaken," said the Hindu; "in the manifestations you speak of, there is an *apport*, as it is called, of fruit trees by the spirits. What I have just shown you is really *spontaneous vegetation;* but the pure fluid, under the direction

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of the Pitris, never was able to produce the three phases of germination, flowering, and fruitage in a single day."

It was near the hour of ablutions; in other words, it was near sunset. The Sanyasi hastened to leave, engaging to meet me, for the last time, at ten o'clock that evening, when the remainder of the night was to be devoted to phenomena of apparition.

There is one fact, however, which I ought not to omit, and which may be of service in arriving at a satisfactory explanation, and that is a fact with which those who live in India are perfectly familiar.

There are a multitude of kitchen plants (I have seen the experiment tried myself a score of times) which, when put at dawn into moist soil, and exposed to the favorable influence of a sun which does wonders, appear above ground between noon and one o'clock, and at six o'clock, or the close of day, are already nearly half an inch high.

On the other hand, I am bound also to say, in justice to the Sanyasi, at least fifteen days are necessary to the germination of a papaw seed.

We have dwelt long enough, however, on a fact which many will reject as a delusion, and which cannot be explained by any process of pure reasoning, excluding the hypothesis of fraud.

CHAPTER VIII

MYSTERIOUS HANDS—THE PRODUCTION OF FLOWERS, CROWNS, ETC.—THE PHANTOM MUSICIAN

Looking over my notes of travel, which were jotted down the next day, I see that they were written under the influence of the great excitement caused by the strange scenes that I had witnessed the day previous. I have simply undertaken to narrate facts as they occurred. If I should transcribe them as written, in the present work, I should be untrue to the character I have assumed.

If the reader is at all curious as to these singular man-

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ners and practices, he will find them described elsewhere[1] in all their details. As in the case of previous phenomena, my office is simply to report the facts that occurred during that surprising evening.

At the appointed hour Govindaswamy quietly entered my room.

"Is not the Sanyasi fatigued by three weeks of watching and prayer?" said I, greeting him in the most friendly manner.

"The Sanyasi's body is never fatigued. It is a slave, whose only duty is obedience," answered the Hindu, sententiously.

Before entering my apartments, he had divested himself of the small piece of cloth, called the *langouty,* about four inches wide, which usually composed his only garment, and had deposited it upon one of the steps. He was entirely naked when he came in, and his seven-knotted stick was fastened to a lock of his long hair.

"Nothing impure" said he, "should come in contact with the body of the *evocator,* if he wishes to reserve his power of communication with the spirits unimpaired.

Whenever I met a Sanyasi of this character I wondered whether those whom the Greeks saw upon the banks of the Indus and whom they called "gymnophist" or naked monks, did not belong to the same class.

My bedroom was on a level with the terrace. I set apart both rooms for our experiments, and carefully shut and fastened all the outside doors by means of which they were accessible.

The terrace was securely closed by its mavable ceiling and curtains of vetivert matting. There was no opening from the outside, and nobody could gain admission except through my bedroom.

In the centre of each room there was a cocoa oil-lamp, protected by a glass shade of the clearest crystal, which hung

[1] *'Travels among performing Fakirs, evol.' Dentu, Paris*

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from a bronze chain and diffused a soft light, sufficiently intense, however, to enable any one to read the smallest type in the remotest corner of the room.

All Hindu houses contain small copper furnaces which are kept constantly supplied with burning coals, on which are burned from time to time a few pinches of a perfumed powder, consisting of sandal wood, iris root, incense and myrrh.

The Sanyasi placed one of these in the centre of the terrace, and deposited by its side a copper platter filled with the fragrant powder; having done so, he took his seat upon the floor in his usual posture, with his arms folded across his chest, and commenced a long incantation in an unknown tongue.

When he was through with the recitation of his *mantrams*, he remained in the same position without making a movement, his left hand resting upon his heart, and his right hand leaning upon his seven-knotted stick.

I thought that he was going to drop into a cataleptic sleep as he had done the day before, but such was not the case. From time to time, he pressed his hand against his forehead, and seemed to make passes as though to relieve his brain.

Involuntarily, I experienced a sudden shock. A slightly phosphorescent cloud seemed to have formed in the middle of my chamber, from which semblances of hands appeared to go and come with great rapidity. In a few minutes, several hands seemed to have lost their vaporous appearence and to resemble human hands; so much so, indeed, that they might have been readity mistaken for the latter. Singular to relate, while some became, as it were, more material, others became more luminous. Some became opaque, and cast a shadow in the light, while others became so transparent that an object behind them could be distinctly seen.

I counted as many as sixteen.

Asking the Sanyasi if I could touch them, I had hardly expressed a wish to that effect, when one of them, breaking

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away from the rest, flew toward me and pressed my outstretched hand. It was small, supple and moist, like the hand of a young woman.

"The spirit is present, though one of its hands is alone visible," said Govindaswamy. "You can speak to it, if you wish."

I smilingly asked whether the spirit to whom that charming hand belonged would give me something in the nature of a keepsake.

Thereupon, in answer to my request, I felt the hand fade away in my own. I looked; it was flying toward a bouquet of flowers, from which it plucked a rosebud, which it threw at my feet and vanished.

For nearly two hours a scene ensued which was calculated to set my head in a whirl. At one time, a hand brushed against my face or fanned it with a fan. At another, it would scatter a shower of flowers all over the room, or would trace in the air, in characters of fire, words which vanished as soon as the last letter was written.

Some of these words were so striking that I wrote them down hastily with a pencil.

Divyavapour gatwa.

Meaning in Sanskrit—"I have clothed myself with a fluidic (fluidique) body."

Immediately afterward, the hand wrote:

Atmanam creyasa yoxyatas
Dehasya'sya vimocanant.

"You will attain happiness when you lay aside this perishable body."

Meanwhile, flashes of genuine lightning seemed to dart across both rooms.

Gradually, however, all the hands disappeared. The cloud from which they came seemed to vanish by degrees as the hands became more material.

In the place where the last hand had disappeared, we found a garland of those yellow flowers with penetrating fragrance which the Hindus use in all their ceremonies.

I offer no explanation—I merely relate what occurred—

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leaving the reader at perfect liberty to draw any conclusion that he may see fit.

I can state positively, however, that the doors of both rooms were closed, that I had the keys in my pocket, and that the Sanyasi had not changed his position.

To these phenomena succeeded two others, that were, perhaps, more surprising still.

Shortly after the hands had disappeared, and while the Sanyasi was still going on with his evocations, a cloud similar to the first, but more opaque and of a brighter colour, hovered near the little furnace, which, at the Hindu's request, I had kept constantly fed with burning coals. By degrees it seemed to assume a human form, and I distinguished the spectre—for I cannot call it otherwise—of an old Braminical priest kneeling by the side of the little furnace.

On his forehead he wore the signs of his consecration to Vishnu, while his body was girdled with the triple cord, which signified that he had been initiated into the priestly caste. He clasped his hands above his head as in the performance of sacrifices, and his lips moved as if they were reciting prayers. At a certain moment, he took a pinch of the perfumed powder and threw it upon the furnace; there must have been an unusual quantity, for the fire emitted a thick smoke which filled both rooms.

When the smoke dispersed, I noticed the spectre less than a couple of yards distant; it held out to me its fleshless hands. I took them in my own, as I returned his greeting, and was surprised to find them, though hard and bony, warm and lifelike.

"Are you really," said I, in a distinct voice, "a former inhabitant of the earth?"

I had hardly finished the question, when the word *Am*

(meaning Yes),

appeared and disappeared in letters of fire upon the bosom of the old Brahmin. The effect was similar to that which would have been produced if the word had been written in the dark with a bit of phosphorus.

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"Will you not leave me something as a token of your presence?"

The spirit broke the triple cord, consisting of three strands of cotton, which was tied about his loins, gave it to me and then faded away before my eyes.

I supposed that the seance was over, and I was going to raise the movable curtains that shaded the terrace, to admit a little fresh air inside, where the heat was really suffocating, when I noticed that the Sanyasi seemed to have no such idea. All at once, I heard a strange tune performed upon an instrument, which seemed to be the harmoniflute that we had used a couple of days before. That, however, appeared impossible, inasmuch as the Peishwa had sent for it the day before, and it was consequently no longer in my rooms.

It sounded at a distance, at first, but soon it came so near that it appeared to come from the next room, and I seemed before long to hear it in my bedroom. I noticed the phantom of a musician from the temples, gliding along the wall. He had a harmoniflute in his hands, from which he drew plaintive and monotonous notes exactly like the religious music of the Hindus.

When he had made the circuit of my room and of the terrace, he disappeared, and I found the instrument that he had used at the very place where he had vanished.

It was actually the raja's harmoniflute. I examined all the doors, but I found them all securely locked and I had the keys in my pocket.

Govindaswamy then arose. All his limbs were covered with perspiration, and he seemed to be thoroughly exhausted, though, in a few hours, he was to set out on his return journey.

"Thanks, Malabar," said I, calling him by a name that he liked, because it reminded him of his native land. May he who possesses the *three mysterious powers*[2] proect you as you journey toward the fair land of the South, and may you

[2]*The Brahmanic trinity*

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find that joy and happiness have ruled in your cottage during your absence."

It is usual in India for people who are about to part to address each other in effusive and flowery terms, and I should have hurt the poor Sanyasi's feelings if I had spoken otherwise or had used plainer language, which he would have taken as a sign of indifference. He answered me in the same manner, but in even more exaggerated style, and, after accepting the presents that I offered him, without even looking at them or even deigning to thank me, he sorrowfully made his parting salaam and noiselessly disappeared behind the curtains that hung before the outside door to my rooms.

As soon as he had gone, I called my servant, and ordered him to remove all the *tattis* and matting from the terrace, so as to admit the cool morning air.

In the pale light of approaching day, I noticed a black speck upon the silvery waves of the Ganges, as they rolled below, which seemed to move toward the opposite shore. I turned my night glass in that direction. It was the Sanyasi, who, as he had said, had awakened the ferryman and was crossing the Ganges on his homeward way to Trivandrum. A faint red streak in the distant sky indicated that the horizon would soon be illuminated by the beams of the rising sun.

He would soon see the ocean with its blue waves, his beloved cocoa-nut trees, and the cottage that he was constantly talking about.

I threw myself upon a hammock for a few hours' rest. When I awoke and remembered the strange scenes that had passed before my eyes, it seemed as though I had been the plaything of a dream. Yet there was the harmoniflute, and I could not find out who, if anybody, had brought it. The floor of the terrace was still strewn with flowers, the crown of flowers was upon a divan, and the words that I had written had not vanished from the memorandum book in which I had jotted them down.

THE PHANTOM OF KARLI

About four years after this, I was travelling in the province

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of Aurangabad, on a visit to the subterranean temple of Karli, having come through Madras, Bellary, and Bejapur.

These celebrated crypts, which are excavated from the living rock, are all situated within the area bounded by the Mahratta Hills, where are also found all the other monuments of this character that India possesses, as, for instance, Ellora, Elephanta, Rosah, etc.

According to E. Roberts, these hills, which all terminate in wide plateaux, were protected, at one time, by fortresses, which made this place a formidable line of defence against the Arabs and Musalmans, which proved effectual for more than five centuries.

The ruins of citadels are still standing upon the steep road leading to Karli.

The entrance to the caves is situated about three hundred feet above the bottom of the hill, and the only access is by a rough and narrow path, which is more like the bed of a torrent than a practicable road.

The path leads to a terrace or platform, partly artificial, and cut in the rock, or built of fragments of rock taken from the inside.

It is about a hundred feet wide, and forms a square worthy of the magnificence of the interior of the temple.

At the left of the portico stands a massive column, supporting, upon its capital, three lions so disfigured by the hand of time that they can with difficulty be recognized at all. This column is covered with inscriptions that are now illegible.

Penetrating into the interior, I stood at the threshold of a spacious vestibule, the entire length of which, measuring about a hundred and sixty feet, is covered with arabesques and sculptured figures of animals and men. On either side of the entrance stood three elephants of colossal size, with their drivers upon their necks and their houdahs upon their backs, in which, with great boldness, the unknown artist had fashioned a multitude of persons. The arched vault is sustained by two rows of pillars, each of which is also surmounted by an elephont, bearing upon his back a man and woman, in

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the form of cariatides, who seem to bend beneath the enormous weight they bear.

The interior is imposing but dismal, and it is impossible to find one's way in the prevailing darkness.

This grand underground crypt is a celebrated place of resort for pilgrims, and crowds of Sanyasis are often met with, who have come from all parts of India, to perform their devotions in the Cave of Evocations.

Others live permanently in the neighbourhood of the temple, where they spend the whole of their time in corporeal mortifications and mental contemplation, sitting, day and night, in front of two blazing fires, which are constantly fed by the attendants, who wear a band upon their mouth to prevent inhaling the slightest impurity, and eat nothing but a few grains of cooked rice, which they moisten with water filtered through a piece of linen cloth. They gradually arrive at a state of emaciation bordering closely upon death. Their moral strength is soon impaired, and when this protracted suicide has brought them to death's door, they have long been in such a state of intellectual and physical decrepitude that they hardly seem to be alive.

All Sanyasis who strive to attain the highest transformations in the superior spheres have to undergo these terrible mortifications.

One was pointed out to me who had arrived some months ago from Cape Comorin, and who, sitting between two fires, in order, no doubt, to hasten the decomposition of his physical organs, had already arrived at a state of almost complete insensibility. Imagine my astonishment when, from a deep scar running across the whole upper part of his skull, I thought I recognized the Sanyasi of Trivandrum.

Approaching and addressing him in that beautiful Southern language in which he so much liked to converse, I asked him if he remembered the French-man of Banaras.

His almost lifeless eyes seemed to blaze up for a moment and I heard him murmur the two Sanskrit words, which I had seen in phosphorescent letters on the evening of our last sitting:

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Divyavapour gatwa,

meaning, "I have clothed myself with fluidic (fluidique) body."

That was the only sign of recognition that I was able to obtain. He was known to the Hindus in the neighborhood as Karli Sava, or the Karli Phantom.

So, decrepitude and imbecility appear to be the final end of all Hindu transformed Sanyasis.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, we can only repeat the words of our preface:

"It is not our office to decide, either for or against, the belief in spirits, whether *mediating or inspiring.*"

Our aim is merely to give an account of the philosophical and spiritualistic tenets of the Brahmins, as well as of the external phenomena and manifestations which are, according to them, the means whereby the Pitris, or ancestral shades, demonstrate their existence and communicate with men.

All ancient religions, and even Christianity itself, acknowledge the existence of extraordinary beings, who have a special part to perform in the continuous movement of creation. All teach that man, upon laying aside his present earthly envelope, enters the superior world in the state of a spirit.

The constant perfectibility of the soul, and the spiritual life—that is their common philosophical idea.

As for the phenomena and manifestations, which are claimed to be supernatural, we also find them to be an outgrowth of this belief, both in the temples of India, Chaldea, and Egypt, and in the catacombs to which the early Christians fled for shelter.

We refrain from making any positive statement as to the possibility or not of the extraordinary phenomena performed by the Fakirs, as we have described them, which some attribute to the adroitest imposture and others to occult intervention, but leave the reader to judge for himself.

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MAGICIANS AT JAHANGIR'S COURT[1]

At the period of which I am about to speak there were to be found in the province of Bengal performers in sleight of hand, or jugglers of such unrivalled skill in their art, that I have thought a few instances of their extraordinary dexterity not unworthy of a place in these memorials. On one occasion in particular, there came to my court seven of these men, who confidently boasted that they were capable of producing effects so strange as far to surpass the scope of the human understanding: and most certainly when they proceeded to their operations, they exhibited in their performances things of so extraordinary a nature, as without the actual demonstration the world would not have conceived possible; such indeed as cannot but be considered among the most suprising circumstances of the age in which we live.

First. They stated that of any tree that should be named they would set the seed in the earth, and that I should immediately witness the extraordinary result. Khaun-e-Jahaun, one of the nobles present, observed that if they spoke truly, he should wish them to produce for his conviction a mulberry tree. The men arose without hesitation, and having in ten separate spots set some seed in the ground, they recited among themselves, in cabalistical language unintelligible to the standers-by, when instantly a plant was seen springing from each of the ten places, and each proved the tree required by Khaun-e-Jahaun. In the same manner they produced a mango, an apple tree, a cypress, a pineapple, a fig tree, an almond, a walnut, and many more trees, and this without any attempt at concealment in the operation; but open to the observation of all present, the trees were perceived gradually and slowly springing from the earth, to the height of one, or perhaps of two cubit when they shot forth leaves and

[1] *A chapter from "Antobiographical Memoirs of Jahangir."*

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branches; the apple tree in particular producing fruit, which fruit was brought to me, and I can attest to its fragrance.

The fact was not however confined to the apple tree alone, for having made the other trees appear in the manner above described, they said that if I thought fit to order it, I should taste of the fruit of every tree, which did not fail to increase the astonishment already excited. Then making a sort of procession round the trees they stood and invoking certain names, in a moment there appeared on the respective trees a sweet mango without the rind, an almond fresh and ripe, a large fig of the most delicious kind and so with the pine, and every other tree of which they had set the seed, the fruit being pulled in my presence and brought to me, and every one present was allowed to taste of it. This, however, was not all; before the trees were removed there appeared among the foliage birds of such surprising beauty, in colour, and shape, and melody of song, as the world never saw before; and the more to confirm us in the reality, the birds were were observed to whisper to each other, and to flutter, and contend with each other in playful indifference among the branches. At the close of the operation the foliage, as in autumn, was seen to put on its variegated tints, and the trees, gradually disappeared into the earth from which they had been made to spring. I can only further observe, that if the circumstances which I have now described had not happened in my own presence, I could never have believed that they had any existence in reality.[2]

Secondly. One night, and in the very middle of the night, when half this globe was wrapped in darkness, one of these seven men stripped himself almost naked, and having spun himself swiftly round several times, he took a sheet with

[2]*I have myself been witness to the mango operation, on the western side of India, but a sheet was employed to cover the process. I have, however, no conception of the means by which it was accomplished, unless the jugglers had the trees about them, in every stage, from the seeding to the fruit.*

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which he covered himself, and from beneath the sheet drew out a resplendent mirror, by the radiance of which a light so powerful was produced, as to have illuminated the hemisphere to an incredible distance round; to such a distance indeed, that we have the attestation of travellers to the fact, who declared that on a particular night, the same night on which the exhibition took place, and at the distance of ten days' journey, they saw the atmosphere so powerfully illuminated, as to exceed the brightness of the brightest day that they had ever seen. This also may be considered, I think, among the extraordinary things of the age.

Thirdly. The seven men stood close together in a group, and without moving either lips or tongue, produced between them such harmony and sweetness of modulation, as if the whole seven had but one voice, and that forming the most delightful unison. It was at the same time distinctly ascertained that the mouth and tongue had not the slightest share in the operation.[3] This also afforded subject of admiration.

Fourthly. They made for themselves about an hundred air bolts[4] (*teir-e-hawah*), which they placed on an elevated spot at two bow-shot distance from the spot on which they stood, informing me that they would cause any one, or as many of them as I chose to order, to explode or take fire, without stirring from their place, in my presence. This they accordingly did, and I do not question that they would have set fire to ten at once if I had thought fit.

Fifth. They placed in my presence a large seething-pot of cauldron, and filling it partly with water, they threw into it eight of the smaller maunns of Irak of rice; when without the application of the smallest spark of fire the cauldron forthwith began to boil; in a little time they took off the lid, and drew from it near a hundred platters full, each with a stewed

[3] *This doubtless was the effect of ventrioloquism.*
[4] *Query, rockets or squibs.*

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fowl at top. This also may be considered among things extraordinary.

Sixth. On a dry spot of ground they placed a particular flower and having danced round it three times successively, an ebullition of water shot up from the flower, and instantly a shower of roses fell on all below, while not a drop of moisture touched the ground. When this miraculous fountain had continued to play for more than an hour they removed the rose or whatever else it might have been, and not a vestige of any thing humid appeared on the spot where it had been placed. Again: they placed the same flower on the ground, and it threw up at this time, alternately, water and flower-shedding fire and this for nearly two parts of a watch of day.

Seventh. One of the seven men stood upright before us, a second passed upwards along his body, and head to head, placed his feet upwards, in the air. A third managed to climb up in the same manner, and planting his feet to those of the second, stood with his head upwards, and so alternately to the seventh, who crowned this extraordinary human pillar with his head uppermost; and what excited an extraordinary clamour of surprise, was to observe the first man, who thus supported on the crown of his head the whole of the other six, lift one foot as high as the shoulder, standing thus upon one leg, and exhibiting a degree of strength and steadiness not exactly within the scope of my comprehension.

Eighth. One of the men stood upright as before; another took hold of him by the hips from behind, and so on to the number of forty men, each laying hold the one or the other by the hips in the same manner. The first man put forth his strength, and contrived to force the whole of the others in train along the field for some time: a degree of bodily strength which could not be witnessed without considerable astonishment.

Ninth. They produced a man whom they divided limb from limb, actually severing his head from the body. They scattered these mutilated members along the ground, and in

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this state they lay for some time. They then extended a sheet or curtain over the spot, and one of the men putting himself under the sheet, in a few minutes came from below, followed by the individual supposed to have been cut into joints, in perfect health and condition, and one might have safely sworn that he had never received wound or injury whatever.

Tenth. They took a small bag, and having first shewn that it was entirely empty, one of them put his hand into the bag; on withdrawing his hand again, out came two game-cocks of the largest size and great beauty, which immediately assailing each other, fought with such force and fury, that their wings emitted sparks of fire at every stroke. This continued for the full space of an astronomical hour, when they put an end to the combat by throwing a sheet over the animals. Again they withdrew the sheet, and there appeared a brace of partridges with the most beautiful brilliant plumage, which immediately began to tune their throats as if there were nothing human present; pecking at worms with the same sort of chuckle (*kakkah*) as they are heard to use on the hill side. The sheet was now thrown, as in the other instance, over the partridges and when again withdrawn, instead of those beautiful birds there appeared two frightful black snakes, with flat heads and crimson bellies, which, with open mouth and head erect, and coiled together attacked each other with the greatest fury, and so continued to do, until, as it appeared, they became quite exhausted, when they fell asunder. The sheet was thrown over as before, and when finally withdrawn, there appeared not a vestige of the snakes or of any thing else.

Eleventh. They made an excavation in the earth in the shape of a tank or reservoir, of considerable dimensions, which they requested us to fill with water. When this was done they spread a covering over the place, and after a short interval having removed the cover, the water appeared to be one complete sheet of ice. and they desired that some of the elephant keepers might be directed to lead their elephants across. Accordingly one of the men set his elephant upon the

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ice and the animal walked over with as much ease and safety as if it were a platform of solid rock, remaining for some time on the surface of the frozen pond without occasioning the slightest fracture in the ice. As usual the sheet was drawn across the place, and being again removed every vestige of ice, and even moisture of any sort had completely disappeared.

Twelfth. They caused two tents to be set up at the distance of a bow-shot the one from the other, the doors or entrances being placed exactly opposite; they raised the tent walls all around, and desired that it might be particularly observed that they were entirely empty. Then fixing the tent walls to the ground two of the seven men entered one into each tent, none other of the seven entering either of the tents. Thus prepared, they said they would undertake to bring out of the tents any animal we chose to mention, whether bird or beast, and set them in conflict with each other. Khaun-e-Jahaun, with a smile of incredulity, required them to shew us a battle between two ostriches. In a few minutes two ostriches of the largest size issued, one from either tent, and attacked each other with such fury that the blood was seen streaming from their heads; they were at the same time so equally matched that neither could get the better of the other and they were therefore separated by the men, and conveyed within the tents. My son Khoorum then called for the neilahgao, and immediately were seen to issue from the tents two of those untameable animals, equally large, fat, and fierce which likewise commenced a furious combat, seizing each other by the neck, and alternately forcing one another backwards and forwards for the space of nearly two guhrries of time, after which they were also separated, and withdrawn into the tents. In short, they continued to produce from either tent whatever animal we chose to name, and before our eyes set them to fight in the manner I have attempted to describe; and although I have exerted my utmost invention to discover the secret of the contrivance it has hitherto been entirely without success.

Thirteenth. They were furnished with a bow and about

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fifty steel pointed arrows. One of the seven men took the bow in hand, and shooting an arrow into the air, the shaft stood fixed at a considerable height; he shot a second arrow, which flew straight to the first, to which it became attached, and so with every one of the remaining arrows to the last of all, which striking the united sheaf suspended in the air, the whole immediately broke asunder and came at once to the earth. This also it would be difficult to explain.

Fourteenth. They filled a large vessel full of water perfectly transparent, and placed it on the floor before me. One of them held in his hand a red rose, which he said, by giving it a dip into the water, he would bring out of it any colour I chose to mention. Accordingly he gave the rose a plunge, and out of it came a bright yellow; and thus at every dip he brought out of it a different kind of colour, at one time a gulaul, at another an orange blossom. In short, a hundred times repeated he would have produced at each a flower of a different kind and colour. They then plunged a skein of white thread into the vessel, and brought it first of a red then of a yellow colour, and so of a different colour of a hundred times repeated, if required so to do.

Fifteenth. They produced a bird-cage, of which the side that appeared next to me exhibited a pair of sweet-singing nightingales. They gave the cage a turn, and though there was no pertition to divide it, there now appeared a couple of beautiful green parrots. Another turn of the cage, and they shewed us another sort of speaking bird of a scarlet colour: another, and we saw a brace of partridges beautifully mottled and coloured, and, what appears extraordinary, of most melodious song. Thus at every change of the four sides of the cage there appeared a different kind of bird at every change, and the like if repeated a hundred times. This must, I think, have been attended with the greatest difficulty in the performance.

Sixteenth. They spread out a carpet of twenty cubits in length, and of very beautiful colours and pattern. They turned it upside downwards, and displayed a pattern and

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colours entirely different; and in like manner at every turn, if an hundred times repeated, the carpet would exhibit patterns and colours entirely different, *ad infinitum*.

Seventeenth. They brought a large ewer, which in my presence they filled full of water. They reversed the ewer with its face downwards, spilling the water to the last drop: they turned the vessel with its face upwards and it appeared as full of water as at first. And this they could have repeated an hundred times over with the same effect; which I could not but consider equally curious and unaccountable.

Eighteenth. They produced a large sack, open at both ends. At one end of this they introduced a melon, which at the other end was brought out a cucumber. Then the cucumber at one end came out at the other a noble bunch of the finest grapes. Again, they introduced the grapes at one end, and at the other out came a bag of apples, of the true abbas sort: and thus, in an hundred instances, if required, they would in each instance exhibit a similar change; all which could not but appear extraordinary to the eye.

Nineteenth. One of the seven men stood up before me, and setting open his mouth, immediately out came the head of a snake. Another of the men seized the snake by the neck, and drew it out to the length of four cubits. This being disposed of by casting it to the ground, another followed in the same manner, and so on to the number of eight, none of them less than four or five cubits in length. These being all cast loose upon the ground, were immediately seen writhing in the folds of each other, and tearing one another with the greatest apparent fury: a spectacle not less strange than frightful.

Twentieth. They took a looking-glass in one hand, and in the other a rose, or other flower of any colour at will. They held the flower for an instant behind the mirror, and bringing it forward again, it had assumed a different colour. Thus it became alternately changed by this sort of sleight, green, and red, and orange and violet and black and white: very curious to behold.

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Twenty-first. They arranged in my presence ten empty porcelain jars, all in attendance having witnessed that they were actually and entirely empty. In about half an hour they uncovered the jars, when, to our surprise, one was found to be full of wheat, another of preserves, another of sugarcandy, another of different sorts of pickles, another of ladies'-legs,[5] another of citron, and another of tamarind. In short, every one of the jars contained a different eatable of some kind or other, which was presented to me, and tasted by most of those who were in attendance. After a litle space they uncovered the jars for the last time, and they were seen to be completely empty, and as clean as if they had been an hundred times washed in the purest spring water. This also was considered something strange and surprising.

Twenty-second. They brought the Koulliaut-e-Saddy, or works of Saady, and in my presence deposited it in a small bag, of course previously examined. They drew out the book, and it had been transformed into the *Diwaun* of Hafez: and the latter being replaced in the bag, it was drawn out again, as the *Diwaun* of Suliman. This was repeated many times, and every time a work was drawn out different from that which was last returned into the bag.

Twenty-third. They produced a chain of fifty cubits in length, and in my presence threw one end of it towards the sky, where it remained as if fastened to something in the air. A dog was then brought forward, and being placed at the lower end of the chain, immediately ran up, and reaching the other end, immediately disappeared in the air. In the same manner a hog, a panther, a lion, and a tiger, were alternately sent up the chain, and all equally disappeared at the upper end of the chain. At last they took down the chain and put it into a bag, no one even discovering in what way the different animals were made to vanish into the air in the

[5] *I have no idea what this refers to. We certainly have a pear to which is sometimes given the name of "Cuisse Madame."*

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mysterious manner above described. This, I may venture to affirm, was beyond measure strange and surprising.

Twenty-fourth. They placed before me a large covered basket,[6] having first shewn to my satisfaction that it was quite empty.

Having claimed my attention, they now took up the cover, and the basket appeared brimful of the choicest viands, most delicious to the taste. They put on the cover, and again in a few minutes lifting it up, the basket now appeared full of fellouny,[7] raisins, almonds, and other dried fruits and aromatic herbs.[8] In short, at every alternate removal of the basket-lid, though an hundred times repeated, a fresh display of delicacies would be presented to the spectator, to our great admiration and surprise.

Twenty-fifth. They caused to be set before me a large covered basin, which they filled with water. They took off the cover to shew that it contained nothing but water; it was now replaced, but being again removed, there appeared in the water ten or a dozen green leaves. The basket was again closed, and, on being re-opened, there appeared three or four large snakes coiled together in the water. Another covering and removal and there appeared in the water 5 or 6 Konly Kiham.[9] At the last uncovering of the vessel it was found to contain neither water nor any thing else but was entirely empty.

Twenty-sixth. One of the men in my presence displayed on his little finger a ruby ring; he removed the ring to another finger, and the gem had taken the colour of an emerald; removed to another fingure, and the emerald became

[6] *Lungrey, if not a basket, I know not what it was.*

[7] *What this is I cannot tell, unless it refers to the following article raisins; in which case it might be cephalonia raisins.*

[8] *Translator's Note:—The third remove is indicated in a handwriting so totally unintelligible in the Persian copy that I have not attempted to render it.*

[9] *Possibly cranes, or some large bird of the kind.*

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a diamond; again removed, and the diamond became a turquoise: and this repeated for any number of times, terminated in the same result, every change producing a gem of a different colour and kind.

Twenty-seventh. A two-edged sword was set up, with the hilt strongly fastened in the earth, and one of the men brought his naked side to bear upon it in such manner, as to excite the utmost surprise that he should have received no bodily injury from having brought himself into such contact with so keen a weapon. (This passage is so extremely ill-written in the Persian copy, that it has been hardly possible to obtain the precise meaning.—Translator.)

Twenty-eighth. They produced a blank volume of the purest white paper, which was placed in my hands, to shew that it contained neither figures nor coloured pages whatever of which I satisfied myself and all around. One of the men took the volume in hand, and the first opening exhibited a page of bright, red, sprinkled with gold, forming a blank tablet splendidly elaborate. The next turn presented a leaf of beautiful azure, sprinkled in the same manner, and exhibiting on the margins numbers of men and women in various attitudes. The juggler then turned to another leaf, which appeared of a Chinese colour and fabric, and sprinkled in the same manner with gold, but on it were delineated herds of cattle and lions, the latter seizing upon the kine in a manner that I never observed in any other paintings. The next leaf exhibited was of a beautiful green, similarly powdered with gold, on which was represented in lively colours a garden, with numerous cypresses, roses, and other flowering shrubs in full bloom, and in the midst of the garden an elegant pavilion. The next change exhibited a leaf of orange in the same manner powdered with gold, on which the painter had delineated the representation of a great battle, in which two adverse kings were seen engaged in the struggles of a mortal conflict. In short, at every turn of the leaf a different colour, scene, and action was exhibited, such as was indeed most pleasing to behold. But of all the performances, this latter

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of the volume of paper, was that which afforded me the greatest delight, so many beautiful pictures and extraordinary changes having been brought under view, that I must confess my utter inability to do justice in the description. I can only add, that although I had frequently in my father's court witnessed such performances, never did I see or hear of any thing in execution so wonderfully strange, as was exhibited, with apparent facility by these seven jugglers. I dismissed them finally with a donation of fifty thousand rupees, with the intimation that all the Ameirs of my court, from the order of one thousand upwards, should each contribute something in proportion.

In very truth, however, we may have bestowed upon these performances the character of trick or juggle, they very evidently partake of the nature of something beyond the exertion of human energy; at all events, such performances were executed with inimitable skill, and if there were in the execution any thing of facility what should prevent their accomplishment by any man of ordinary capacity? I have heard it stated that the art has been called the Cemnanian (perhaps *asmaunian*, 'celestial') and I am informed that it is also known and practised to a considerable extent among the nations of Europe. It may be said indeed, that there exists in some men a peculiar and essential faculty which enables them to acomplish exertion, such as frequently to baffle the utmost subtilty of the understanding to penetrate.[10]

I shall here take upon me to relate, that once upon a time a native of Arabia, who had passed the age of forty, was brought to the metropolis for the purpose of being presented to me. When introduced to my presence, I observed that he had lost his arm close to the shoulder, and it occurred to me to ask him whether this was his condition from his birth, or

[10]*The latter part of this passage is one among the many that, through the unaccountable ignorance of the person who copied the Persian memoir, I have found no small difficulty in rendering into common sense.*

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whether it was an injury which he had received in battle. He seemed considerably embarrased by the question but stated that the accident which had deprived him of his arm was attended with circumstances so very extraordinary, as to be rather beyond credibility, and might perhaps expose him to some degree of ridicule: he had therefore made a vow never to describe it. On my importuning him further, however, and urging that there could exist no reason for concealment compatible with what he owned me for my protection, he finally relented, and releated what follows.

"When I was about the age of fifteen, it happened to me to accompany my father on a voyage to India; and at the expiration of about sixty days, during which we had wandered in different directions through the ocean, we were assailed by a storm so dreadful, as to be for ever impressed upon my recollection. For three days and three nights successively it raged with such indescribable fury, the sea rose in such tremendous surges, the rain descended in such torrents, and the peals of thunder accompanied by lightning so incessant, as to be terrific in the utmost degree. To complete the horrors of our situation, the ship's mast, which was as large in compass as two men with arms extended could encircle, snapped in the middle, and falling upon the deck, destroyed many of the crew. The vessel was therefore on the very verge of foundering; but the tempest subsiding at the close of the third day, we were for the present preserved from destruction, although we were driven far from the course which led to the port of our destination.

"When, however, the ship had for some days been pursuing this uncertain course, we came in sight unexpectedly of what appeared to be a lofty mountain in the midst of the ocean; and as we neared the spot it was soon ascertained to be an island, covered with numerous buildings, and interspersed with trees and river streams in most agreeable variety. Our stock of water in the ship was nearly exhausted and we therefore steered close in land; and from certain fisherman who were out in their boats we now learnt that the island

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was in possession of the Portuguese Franks; that it was extremely populous, and that there were no Mussulman inhabitants; moreover, that they had no intercourse with strangers.

"To be as brief as possible: as soon as the ship had reached the anchoring ground and dropped her anchor, a Portuguese captain and another officer came on board; and instantly, without leaving even an infant child to take care of the ship, conveyed the whole of the ship's company, passengers and all, in boats to the shore; desiring, at the same time, that we might not be under any apprehensions, for that as soon as it could be discovered that there was among us a person that suited a particular purpose, which they did not choose to explain, that one alone would be detained, and the others dismissed without injury. The port being theirs, and ourselves entirely at their mercy, we were compelled to submit to all they said and accordingly the whole ship's company, merchants, slaves, and mariners, to the number of twelve hundred persons, were all crowded into one house.

"From thence they sent for us one by one alternately, and stripping us stark naked, one of their hakeims or physicians proceeded to make the minutest examination of our bodies, in every muscle, vein, and limb telling each respectively after undergoing such examination, that he was at liberty to go about his business. This they continued to do until it came to the turn of myself and a brother who was with us; and what was our dismay and horor when, after the described examination, the hakeim delivered us into the custody of some of the people in attendance, with orders to place us behind the curtain; that is, where we should not be open to human intercourse. With the exception of my brother and myself, the whole of the ship's company, on whose bodies they failed to discover the marks of which they were in search, were now dismissed. Neither could my father either by tears or remonstrances succeed in diverting them from their purpose; to his repeated demands to know in what his sons could have offended, that out of a ship's company of twelve hundred

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persons they alone should be detained they replied only by a frown, utterly disregarding every intreaty.

"They now conveyed my brother and myself to a part of the place where they lodged us in separate chambers, opposite however to each other. Every morning they brought us for food fowl kabaubs, honey, and white bread, and this continued for the space of ten days. At the expiration of that period the naokhoda (or commander of the ship), demanded permission to proceed on his voyage. My father implored that he would delay his departure, if it were only for two or three days longer, when peradventure the Portuguese might be induced to give up his sons. He presented himself to the ruler of the port, and again by the most humble intreaties endeavoured to obtain our release, but in vain.

"The same medical person on whose report we were detained now came with ten other Franks to the house or chamber where my brother was confined, and again stripping him naked, they laid him on his back on a board or table, where he was exposed to the same manual examination as before. They then left him and came to me, and stretching me out on a board in the same manner and plight, again examined my body in every part as before. Again they returned to my brother; for from the situation of our prisons, the doors being exactly opposite, I could distinctly observe all that passed. They sent for a large bowl and knife, and placing my brother with his head over the bowl, and his cries and supplications all in vain, they struck him over the mouth and with the knife actually severed head from the body, both the head and his blood being received in the bowl. When the bleeding had ceased they took away the bowl of blood, which they immediately poured into a pot of boiling oil brought for the purpose, stirring the whole together with a ladle until both blood and oil became completely amalgamated. Will it be believed, that after this they took the head and again fixing it exactly to the body, they continued to rub the adjoining parts with the mixture of blood and oil until he whole had

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been applied. They left my brother in this state, closed the door, and went their way.

"At the expiration of three days from this, they sent for me from my place of confinement, and telling me that they had obtained at my brother's expense all that was necessary to their purpose, they pointed out to me the entrance to a place underground, which they said was the repository of gold and jewels to an incalculable amount. Thither they informed me I was to descend, and that I might bring away for myself as much of the contents as I had strength to carry. At first I refused all belief to their assertions, conceiving that doubtless they were about to send me where I was to be exposed to some tremendous trial, but as their importunities were too well enforced, I had no alternative but submission.

"I entered the opening which led to the passage, and having descended a flight of stairs about fifty steps, I discovered four separate chambers. In the first chamber, to my utter surprise, I beheld my brother apparently restored to perfect health. He wore the dress and habiliments of the Ferenguies, or Portuguese, had on his head a cap of the same people, profusely ornamented with pearl and precious stones, a sword set with diamonds by his side, and a stuff similarly enriched under his arm. My surprise was not diminished when the moment he observed me I saw him turn away from me, as if under feelings of the utmost disgust and disdain. I became so alarmed at a reception so strange and unaccountable, that although I saw that it was my own brother, the very marrow in my bones seemed to have been turned into cold water. I ventured, however, to look into the second chamber, and there I beheld heaps upon heaps of diamonds and rubies, and pearl and emeralds, and every other description of precious stones, thrown one on the other in astonishing profusion. The third chamber into which I looked contained in similar heaps an immense profusion of gold; and the fourth chamber was strewed middle deep with silver.

"I had some difficulty in determining to which of these glittering deposits I should give the preference. At last I re-

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collected that a single diamond was of greater value than all the gold I could gather into my robe, and I accordingly decided on tucking up my skirts and filling them with jewels. I put out my hand in order to take up some of these glittering articles, when from some invisible agent, perhaps it was the effect of some overpowering effluvia, I received a blow so stunning, that I found it impossible to stand in the place any longer. In my retreat, it was necessary to pass the chamber in which I had seen my brother. The instant he perceived me about to pass he drew his sword, and made a furious cut at me. I endeavoured to avoid the stroke by suddenly starting aside, but in vain; the blow took effect, and my right arm dropped from the shoulder-joint. Thus wounded and bleeding, I rushed from this deposit of treasure and horror, and at the entrance above found the physician and his associates who had so mysteriously determined the destiny of my unhappy brother. Some of them went below and brought away my mutilated arm; and having closed up the entrance with stone and mortar, conducted me, together with my arm all bleeding as I was, to the presence of the Portuguese governor, men and women, and children, flocking to the doors to behold the extraordinary spectacle.

"The wound in my shoulder continued to bleed; but having received from the governor a compensation of three thousand tomauns, a horse with jewelled caparison, a number of beautiful female slaves and many males with the promise of future favour in reserve, the Portugese physician was ordered to send for me, and applying some styptic preparation to the wound it quickly healed, and so perfectly, that it might be said I was thus armless from my birth. I was then dismissed, and having shortly afterwards obtained a passage in another ship, in about a month from my departure reached the port for which I was destined."

On the above relation, continues our imperial memorialist, I have to observe, that in all probability the extraordinary circumstances to which it refers were effected through the operations of chimia ('alchemy') known to be extensively

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practised among the Franks, and in which the jugglers from Bengal appear to have been very well instructed.

BURIED ALIVE! *

Only a generation ago, if we are to credit the statements of several eye-witnesses, the yogi Haridas after voluntarily falling into an hypnotic condition in the presence of Maharajah Runjeet Singh, of the Punjab and his court, was carefully buried in a garden outside the city of Lahore. For forty days strict watch was kept over the grave, and, at the expiration of that time, the yogi was exhumed, cold, stiff, and unconscious; but was gradually restored to animation by applying warmth to the head and friction to the body, while forcing air gently into the lungs. Granting the truth of the story, and the absence of any collusion or trickery, the only legitimate inference from the facts is, of course, that Haridas, in the practice of yoga-vidya, or otherwise, had acquired the art of suspending animation for a considerable period; an art not without interest from a physiological point of view, but on the acquisition of which, Europeans are never likely to care for. . . . Referring to the case of Haridas, the writer, (W.F.K.) of the articles "Hybernation" in the new edition of the Encylopaedia Britannica says:

"Long continued suspension of consciousness in man, whether voluntary or otherwise, is rare in temperate climates, but it is more frequent in India, where some religious ascetics are stated, on unimpeachable authority, to possess the power of throwing themselves into a state closely resembling hybernation for an indefinite period. Many curious cases have been recorded by Braid in his small treatise on "Human Hybernation" published in 1850, the most celebrated of which is that of a fakir who was actually buried alive at Lahore in 1837 in the presence of Runjeet Singh and Sir Claude Wade, and who was dug up and restored to consciousness several months' afterwards, after every precaution had been taken to prevent any from disturbing the grave in the interval."

**Drawn from "Indian Life : Religious and Social" by Professor J. Campbell Oman.*

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"HUMAN HYBERNATION"

From "The Court and Camp of Runjeet Singh" by W. G. Osborne.

6th June, 1838. The monotony of our camp life was broken this morning by the arrival of a very celebrated character in the Punjab, and a person we had all expressed great anxiety to see, and whom the Maharaja had ordered over from Amritsar on purpose.

He is a Fakir [*Sannyasi*], and is held in extraordinary respect by the Sikhs, from his alleged capacity of being able to bury himself alive for any period of time. So many stories were current on the subject, and so many respectable individuals maintained the truth of these stories, that we all felt curious to see him. He professes to have been following this trade, if so, it may be called, for some years, and a considerable time ago, several extracts from the letters of individuals who had seen the man in the upper provinces, appeared in the Calcutta papers. giving some account of his extraordinary powers, which were, at the time, naturally enough, looked upon as mere attempts at a hoax upon the inhabitants of Calcutta. Captain Wade, political agent at Ludhiana, told me that he was present at his resurrection after an interment of some months, General Ventura having buried him in the presence of the Maharaja and many of his principal Sirdars; and, as far as I can recollect, these were the particulars as witnessed by General Ventura: After going through a regular course of preparation, which occupied him some days, and the details of which are too disgusting to dilate upon, the Fakir reported himself ready for interment, in a vault which had been prepared for the purpose by order of the Maharaja. On the appearance of Ranjit and his court, he proceeded to the final preparations that were necessary, in their presence, and after stopping with wax his ears, nostrils, and every other orifice through which it was possible for air to enter his body, except his mouth, he was stripped and placed in a linen bag; and the last preparation concluded by turning his tongue back, and thus, closing the gullet, he immediately died away into a sort

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of lethargy. The bag was then closed, and sealed with Ranjit's own seal, and afterwards placed in a small deal box, which was also locked and sealed. The box was then placed in a vault, the earth thrown in and trod down, and a crop of barley sown over the spot, and sentries placed round it. The Maharaja was, however, very sceptical on the subject, and twice in the course of the ten months he remained underground sent people to dig him up, when he was found to be in exactly the same position, and in a state of perfectly suspended animation. At the termination of the ten months, Captain Wade accompanied the Maharaja to see him disinterred, and states that he examined him personally and minutely, and was convinced that all animation was perfectly suspended. He saw the locks opened, and the seals broken by the Maharaja, and the box brought into the open air. The man was then taken out, and on feeling his wrist and heart, not the slightest pulsation was perceptible. The first thing towards restoring him to life was the forcing his tongue back to its proper position, which was done with some little difficulty by a person inserting his finger and forcibly pulling it back, and continuing to hold it until it gradually resumed its natural place. Captain Wade described the top of his head to have been considerably heated; but all other parts of the body, cool and healthy in appearance. Pouring a quantity of warm water over him constitutes the only further measure for his restoration, and in two hours' time he is as well as ever.

He is apparently about thirty years of age, with a disagreeable and cunning expression of countenance. We had a good deal of conversation with him, and he volunteered to be interred for any length of time we pleased, in order to convince us that he is no impostor. We took him at his word, and he is to be buried on our arrival at Lahore, and to remain underground during our stay there, which will probably be three weeks or a month; and though he complains that the period is too short, and that it is hardly worth his while to undergo all the trouble of the preparation, if he comes out

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alive I will willingly give him credit for being able to remain a hundred years if he chooses it.

He states that his thoughts and dreams are most delightful, and that it is painful to him to be awoke from his lethargy.

His nails and hair cease growing, and on his first disinterment he is for a short time giddy and weak, but very soon recovers his natural health and spirits. His only fear whilst in his grave is that of being attacked by insects, which he obviates by having his box suspended from the ceiling.

On my return to Simla, accident placed in my hands the appendix to a medical topography of Ludhiania, by Dr. Mc Gregor, of the Horse Artillery, by whose permission I have extracted the following account of one of the former interments and resurrections of the Fakir:

"A Faqueer who arrived at Lahore engaged to bury himself for any length of time, shut up in a box, and without either food or drink. Ranjit naturally disbelieved the man's assertions, and was determined to put them to the test. For this purpose the Faqueer was shut up in a wooden box, which was placed in a small apartment below the middle of the ground; there was a folding door to his box, which was secured by a lock and key. Surrounding this apartment there was the garden house, the door of which was likewise locked, and outside the whole, a high wall, having its doorway built up with bricks and mud. In order to prevent any one from approaching the place, a line of sentries was placed, and relieved at regular intervals. The strictest watch was kept up for the space of forty days and forty nights, at the expiration of which period the Maharaja, attended by his grandson and several of his sirdars, as well as General Ventura, Captain Wade, and myself, proceeded to disinter the Faqueer. The bricks and mud were removed from the outer doorway; the door of the garden house was next unlocked, and lastly that of the wooden box, containing the Faqueer; the latter was found covered with a white sheet, on removing which, the figure of the man presented itself in a sitting posture; his hands and arms were pressed to his sides, and his legs and thighs crossed. The first step of the

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operation of resuscitation consisted in pouring over his head a quantity of warm water; after this, a hot cake of otta was placed on the crown of his head; a plug of wax was next removed from one of his nostrils, and on this being done, the man breathed strongly through it. The mouth was now opened, and the tongue, which had been closely applied to the roof of the mouth brought forward, and both it and the lips anointed with ghee; during this part of the proceeding, I could not feel the pulsation of the wrist, though the temperature of the body was much above the natural standard of health. The legs and arms being extended, and the eyelids raised, the former were well rubbed, and a little ghee applied to the latter; the eyeballs presented a dimmed, suffused appearance, like those of a corpse. The man now evinced signs of returning animation, the pulse became perceptible at the wrist, whilst the unnatural temperature of the body rapidly diminished. He made several ineffectual efforts to speak, and at length uttered a few words, but in a tone so low and feeble as to render them inaudible. By and by his speech was re-established, and he recognised some of the bystanders, and addressed the Maharaja, who was seated opposite to him, watching all his movements. When the Faqueer was able to converse, the completion of the feat was announced by the discharge of guns, and other demonstrations of joy. A rich chain of gold was placed round his neck by Ranjit, and earrings, baubles, and shawls were presented to him. However extraordinary this feat may appear, both to Europeans and Indians, it is difficult, if not impossible, to explain it on phrenological principles. The man not only denied his having tasted food or drink, but even maintained that he had stopped the function of respiration, during a period of forty days and forty nights. To all appearance, this long fasting had not been productive of its usual effects, as the man seemed to be in rude health, so that digestion and assimilation had apparently proceeded in the usual manner; but this he likewise denied, and piously asserted, that during the whole time he had enjoyed a most delightful trance. It is well known that the people of Hindusthan, by constant practice, can bring themselves to exist

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on the smallest portion of food for several days, and it is equally true, that by long training, the same people are able to retain the air in their lungs for some minutes; but how the functions of digestion and respiration could be arrested for such a length of time appears unaccountable. The concealment of the Faqueer during the performance of his feat, so far from rendering the latter more wonderful, serves but to hide the means he employs for its accomplishment, and until he can be persuaded to undergo the confinement in a place where his actions may be observed, it is needless to form any conjectures regarding them. It is well known to physiologists that the heart beats and the function of the lungs is performed, even after an animal's head has been removed; but to suppose for an instant, that the functions of the body can be performed for any length of time, without a supply of fresh arterial blood, which necessarily implies the action of respiration, is absurd, and though in cases of asphyxia, from drowning and hanging, or the inhalation of noxious gases, both circulation and respiration cease for a time; still there is a limit to this, beyond which life becomes extinct, and no power with which we are acquainted is able to recall it. My own opinion is, that the man enjoyed the functions of respiration, circulation, and assimilation, in a degree compatible with the existence of life, and that by long training he had acquired the art of retaining the air in the lungs for some minutes during the time he was being shut up, and when he was again exposed. How he managed to get a supply of food and drink I by no means wish to hazard a guess. It is said that, previous to undergoing the confinement, this man gradually overcomes the power of digestion, so that milk received into the stomach undergoes no change. He next forces all the breath in his body into the brain, which is described as thereby imparting the feeling of a hot coal to the head; the lungs now collapse, and the heart, deprived of its usual stimulus, to use

[1](*See Page* 60, *line* 34) *"Thirty-five years in the East" by Dr. Honigberger, Physician to the Court of Lahore pp.* 126, 130. *London* 1852.

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a homely phrase, 'shuts up shop.' Having thus disposed of digestion, assimilation, respiration, and circulation, all the passages of the body are next stopped, the legs and thighs are crossed, the hands and arms are pressed to the sides; in short, the man presents the same appearance as when his box was opened. However childish this may all appear, the explanation was quite satisfactory to the good people of Lahore. The same individual exhibited at Jessulmere with success; an account of his feat there is given in Lieut. Boileau's work, lately published."

CHAPTER IX

THE AGHORI

Reprinted from "The Charm of India": An Anthology. Edited by Claud Field.

Having resolved to explore some caves which abound in the vicinity of Abu, once, perhaps, the habitations of a numerous Troglodyte population, I was started by the sudden appearance from one of them of an object, which, though the form was human, I could scarcely believe to be man. He was a tall, gaunt figure; his hair and beard through long neglect had become matted and ropy with filth; his body, nearly naked, and almost fleshless, was smeared with blood, soot, and ordure; his eyes glared and expressed a wild maniac, savage meaning, and his features altogether had a character at once horrid and horrifying. I could not have imagined without actual experience that the human form and face were capable of exciting such emotions as those I experienced. I was alone and I confess this spectre inspired me with almost as much alarm as I should have felt had a tiger faced me.

The man was an Aghori or an Aghorapanthi belonging to a class of ascetics, happily now not numerous, who worship Maha Devi in her most dreadful forms, and who not merely sacrifice victims, but subsist on human flesh. Although, by their horrid practices and the severe penances to which they subject themselves, they acquire a little too exalted piety (the

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Hindus universally believing that pain, privation, and any form of suffering for religion's sake, earn a proportionate measure of heaven-worthiness), yet they are, as individuals, shunned and abhorred by other sects.

Although I would have been content to retire from the presence of the Aghori, some undefined motive, fear, pride, or curiosity, or a compound of the three, kept me riveted to the spot. We surveyed each other for some time without speaking a word. The first to break silence was myself. "Who are you?" I asked. The Aghori pointed upwards either to the sky or to the mountain. I repeated my question and he muttered something which I could not understand. Beginning to gain confidence, and seeing one of my servants approaching, I scrupled not to comply with an invitation which he conveyed to me by gesture and entered his cave. It made me shudder. Heaps of bones with distinct marks of teeth upon them lay in one corner; part of the body of a half-putrid dog, on which, no doubt, the Aghori had made his last meal, was deposited upon a stone in another place. Dirt of every possible variety defiled the floor and walls, and the odour of the cave was probably more detestable than that of Polyphemus's mansion.

The Aghori squtted down upon a heap of earth, or of indurated filth, and looking in my face, inquired whether I were not a Feringhee,. I answered "Yes." "You are unused," he resumed in a more rational and calm manner than I could have anticipated from his appearance, "to such a place and such objects as you see in it. I am a worshipper of the dread Kali, the goddess who delights in blood. Blood is my delight. It was not always so." The last expression excited some curiosity to inquire into the wretch's history, if he would deign to tell it; and I resolved to make the experiment. It is needless to detail the various devices I employed to effect my object, which was at length attained, and the Aghori began as follows:

"I said it was not always so with me, as you see me now. I am of a proud Rahtore family, of the stock of Seoji. The Toork and the Feringhee have trampled us under foot, but we are Rahtores still. My grandsire was murdered by the Thakur

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of Notra. The feud descended to me. I resolved to balance it. The Thakur's son had made overtures to adjust the quarrel; I feigned acquiescence. The Thakur invited me to a feast at his village, and thereupon I laid a plan with some of my family to go secretly armed and avenge our grandsire's murder. Whilst the opium-draught was passing round, the appointed signal was given; I unsheathed my dagger, and in a moment it was plunged into the throat—not of the Thakur, but of my own brother, who had resolved to save him, and had rushed between us. Then followed a melee, in which the Thakur was killed, and the banquet-hall was drenched with blood. The death of the Thakur satiated the thirst of vengeance which had hitherto nourished a fever in my heart; and when calm I was appalled at what I had done. I mounted my horse and rode into the Thul, where I consorted with the wild Bheels. Their habits sharpened my ferocity of temper. I became habituated to the sight of blood, and many a skull did I add to the necklace of Kali. Crossing the borders of the Thul, towards the river, with a party of Vaniputras, we espied a body of horsemen. I was the first to make one of their number bite the dust. He was recognised by me as my brother —my only remaining brother. Confounded at this new calamity, I felt that my doom was fixed; that I had been chosen by the dark goddess as one of her peculiar priesthood, and I confessed myself an Aghori. The rites which my profession required exiled me from social life. I was compelled to fly to the haunts of wild animals, to court their society, and to live like them upon offal and carrion. Hunger and habit, the vows I had made to the goddess, and a depraved appetite engendered by misanthropy, gradually gave birth to new tastes, and I acquired a relish for food which you deem offensive: As I had renounced all communion of feeling with men, it was fitting that none of my former habits and tastes should remain—that no link should subsist between me and mankind. The dissolution of these ties is an evidence that I am one of the elect of Maha Devi. I glory in the distinction. None of the weak passions of humanity molest me; I am as far superior to them all as the Guru Sikra of Abuji is lifted above these

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plains. Neither fear nor love nor hope nor anxiety nor remorse can now vex my heart. The deeds of blood I have done were so many unconscious propitiations of the list of her most favoured votaries. The disgust which my aspect raises in others is grateful to me. I abhor mankind; I belong to Heaven —to Kali. Not only do men shun me, but the very monsters of the jungle fly my presence. I am a god—an Aghori."

I had heard of these miscreants before, but had always classed them among the other misguided creatures, who had consented to barter the comforts of this life for the hope of a splendid existence in some imaginary state hereafter. Here, however, I had before me a proof that the horrors of Hindu superstition opened a refuge for crime and stilled the torments of compunction; that there was a branch of that superstition —which mawkish-minded liberalists clothe with the attributes of mildness and charity—which exacted from its votaries the commission of the deadliest offences against society; and that Thuggism is in reality as much a superstitious as a secular atrocity. Bhavani, the tutelary goddess of the Thugs, is another form of the same Hindu divinity as Kali, and the corpses of the unhappy travellers whom they strangle, are so many sacrifices to their bloodthirsty goddess.

INDIAN DEVOTEEISM

(By Mrs. Postans)

Reprinted from "The Charm of India": An Anthology Edited by Claud Field

Near a tank in Bombay there is a celebrated Sunyasi devotee who, for some supposed or actual crime, determined to do penance, and vowed to hold a little plant of the sacred *tulsi* in his extended hand for twenty years. The muscles of the hand now enclose the flower-pot like an iron frame; the plant has become a tree, and the nails of the devotee curl downwards like spiral horns; yet the man is well, cheerful and triumphant in the respect he elicits from the admiring hosts of the great bazaar. Another devotee lay on a bed of spikes for many years near the city of Baroda, in the hot weather

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placing logs of ignited wood under the bed, and during winter allowing cold water to all on his head continually from a perforated vessel suspended over his bed. In the neighbourhood of Baroda there was also an old man who had been for twelve years without lying down. He slept leaning on a bit of wood about a foot in length, suspended from the branches of a peepul tree, and was remarkable for his acuteness and intelligence. A friend of my own who knew him well, told me he had often inquired of him the circumstances of his penance, when he dilated much on the suffering caused him during the first two years' probation, when it had been necessary for persons constantly to support him, but that now, the muscles having become rigid, he had long ceased to experience any uneasiness.

The man I have described as holding the *tulsi* tree in Bombay was one of the class called "Urddhabahus," followers of Siva. These men are always mendicants, and generally lead a solitary life, but have no fixed residence. The most remarkable case of itinerancy in this way occurred in the life of a man who, having for twenty years held both hands above his head, travelled over the whole of India and Central Asia, pursuing his way even to Moscow and returning with wisdom and knowledge. I well recollect in Cutch to have noted every day during our morning ride near the seashore at Mandavie the head of a man apparently busied in some labour on a desolate sand-heap several miles from all human habitation, and, prompted at length by powerful curiosity, I rode up to observe his occupations, when I found that the unfortunate being was a Swaite devotee, who had buried himself to the throat in the sand, and was fed and watched by a disciple, who had erected a hut at the foot of the mound.

CHAPTER X
WIZARD OF THE EAST

Reprinted from Vol. II of "From the Hebrides to the Himalayas" by Constance F. Gordon Cumming, London, 1876.

There are a certain set of tricks which most jugglers can

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practise with considerable skill, such as swallowing knives, or even a sword, and blowing fire from the mouth.

The sword swallowing is no sham; eighteen inches of bright cold steel do actually find their way down the man's gullet, he taking no other precaution than to oil the blade, which of course is blunt. His throat has gradually been hardened by astringent gargles, and in his early days has cost him many a sharp pain, and restricted his food to spoon-diet. By the time he has got well used to swallowing steel, he is ready to do likewise with snakes, which he holds by the tip of the tail and lets them crawl down, while he draws in his breath. As soon as he breathes again they shrink back from the heat!

Another curious feat is to throw a cocoa-nut into the air and catch it on the head, when the nut shivers to atoms instead of breaking the head, as might be expected. Of course this is all knack, just like breaking a poker across your arm, and has been capped by an Englishman, who substitutes nodules of flint for the cocoa-nuts, and produces the same result.

Among the most common, yet most striking proofs of sleight-of-hand is the mango tricks. The juggler, whose drapery consists of half a yard of cotton; his theatre, your own verandah; his stock-in-trade, a mere handful of toys, proceeds to bury a mango-stone in a little mud and covers it with a jar. A few minutes later the jar is raised, and lo! a tender green seed-leaf has sprouted. When next we peep into that magic hot-bed, the tiny leaf has long since withered, and a flourishing young tree has developed with a rapidity the secret of which would be a boon indeed to our patient foresters. The same trick is shown with the pineapple plant, whose ripe fruit, presented to the spectators, gives a charming flavour of reality to the deception.

There were, however, some of these tricks for which I looked in vain. One, in particular, which I cannot refrain from quoting from the words of an eyewitness. The more so, as from the unchanging nature of everything Hindu, I have little doubt that the same feat is still frequently enacted.

"One of the party, a very handsome woman, fixed on her

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head a fillet of strong texture, to which were fastened, at equal distances, twenty pieces of string of equal length, with a common noose at the end of each. Under her arm she carried a basket, in which were carefully deposited twenty eggs. Her basket, the fillet, and the nooses were carefully examined by us. There was evidently no deception.

"The woman advanced alone, and stood before us. She then began to move rapidly round on one spot, whence she never for one instant moved, spinning round and round like a top.

"When her pace was at its height, she drew down one of the strings, which now flew horizontally round her head and, securing an egg in the noose, she jerked it back to its original position, still twirling round with undiminished velocity, and repeating the process until she had secured the whole twenty eggs in the nooses previously prepared for them. She projected them rapidly from her hand the moment she had secured them, until at length the whole twenty were flying round her in an unbroken circle. Thus she continued spinning at undiminished speed for fully five minutes; after which, taking the eggs one by one from their nooses, she replaced them in her basket; and then in one instant stopped, without the movement of limb, or even the vibration of a muscle, as if she had been suddenly transformed into marble. Her countenance was perfectly clam, nor did she exhibit the slightest distress from her extraordinary exertions."

Another of the feats related by the same witness, though much more frequently met with, is equally striking. He describes how a stout, ferocious-looking fellow stepped forward, and made him examine a light wicker basket, which he then placed over a pretty little girl about eight years old, utterly guiltless of raiment. The ruffian then asked the child some question, and the little voice answered from the basket. Question and answer grew loud and rapid, till the man, in violent passion, threatened to kill the child, who vainly prayed for mercy.

There was a stern reality in the scene which was terrible to witness. The man set his foot on the frail basket, beneath

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which cowered the terrified child, and seizing a sword plunged it into the basket again and again, with the blind ferocity of an excited demon, his face frantic with rage. The shrieks of the child were so real and distracting that the spectators stood pale and paralyzed with terror. Blood ran in streams from the basked; the child was heard to struggle under it; her groans gradually sank to a faint moan, fainter and fainter, then all was still. So vivid was the scene that the impulse of the spectators was to rush on the monster and fell him to the earth, when, to their inexpressible relief and astonishment, the juggler muttered a few cabalistic words, took up his basket, and there exhibited—no, mangled corpse—only a little blood-stained earth; and the little child, with a graceful *salaam*, advanced from among the crowed to claim a *backsheesh*, which was readily bestowed. What made the deception more remarkable was that the man stood quite aloof from the crowd, not a creature within several feet of him.

After this he took a large earthen vessel with wide mouth, filled it with water, and turned it upside down, when all the water, of course, ran out. He then reversed the jar, which, we perceived to be quite full, and all the earth around was perfectly dry. He then emptied the jar, and handed it round for our inspection. He bade one of us fill it to the brim; after which he upset it, but not a drop of water flowed; nevertheless, to our astonishment, it was quite empty. This trick was shown reapeatedly, and at last he broke the jar to prove to us that it really was nothing but the ordinary earthenware that it appeared.

Next a large basket was produced, and on lifting it a Pariah dog lay crouching on the ground. The basket cover was replaced, and the second peep showed a litter of seven puppies with their interesting mother. A goat, a pig, and other animals successively appeared from this magic receptacle, although, as before, the exhibitor stood quite alone, and in full view of all spectators.

Though we had not the luck of coming in for any exhibitions so striking as these, we, being novices, found a store of interest in the curious beings who did find their way to us.

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Snake-charmers came continually. They play on a sort of squeaking bag-pipe, which is supposed to have wondrous charms for all manner of serpents, and it must be a deaf adder indeed which will not come forth to listen to the voice of the charmer. There have been undoubted instances in which really wild snakes have been thus attracted, probably those which had a fine ear for music. We heard of one instance in which a young Englishman, much addicted to playing the flute, had been compelled to give up that harmless pursuit because his house was in a snaky district, and his gentle melodies attracted such a multitude of servants that even the Indians objected!

But of course, as a general rule, those so triumphantly produced from the garden hedge have been very well trained by their dancing master. It is a horrible thing, however, to see a shrinking child adorned with serpents of every size as bracelets and anklets, with a great boa constrictor or a cobra curling about at his feet or round his body, especially when we know for a fact that there have been instances in which the poison fangs have not been removed.

Forbes mentions a dancing cobra, which lay on his table for an hour while he painted it. He frequently handled it to observe the beauty of the spots and the marks on the hood like a pair of spectacles, all the time fully believing that the venomous fangs had been extracted. A few hours later the same vicious reptile sprang at a young woman, bit her in the throat, and in half an hour she was dead. Nor are even the most experienced snake-charmers always proof against accidents. Many horrible cases have occurred where a cobra has caused his master's death.

But the strangest thing of all is to hear of a serpent causing its own death, as in a case mentioned by Dr. Dearing, where a snake having much irritated, turned suddenly round, open-mouthed, and caught its fang in its own flesh. Very soon after it rolled over and died, poisoned by its own virus.

Bruce, the Abyssinian traveller, mentions having seen a snake-charmer at Cairo plunge his hand into a tubful of ser-

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pents; thence take a cerastes (a most venomous snake), and, putting it on his bare head, cover it with his red cap. After a while he put it in his bosom, then twined it round his neck like a necklace. Shortly afterwards it sprang at a hen and bit it, and the bird died a few moments later. In order to prove that the snake was no precious favourite, the man finally took it up by the neck, and beginning at the tail, ate it up, as you would eat a piece of celery, without the smallest repugnance!

I have myself seen a refractory snake give his keeper a bite so severe as to cause him very great pain. However the wound bled freely, and after the man had sucked out as much of the venom as he could, he produced something of the shape and colour of a bean, very hard and polished. This he laid on the sore finger. It seemed to draw out the venom, and then fall off of itself. He called it snake-stone, and said it was made of stag's horn. So you see we are not the only people who know that hartshorn, or ammonia in some form, is a cure for such venomous bites.

Everyone travelling in the east should have spirits of ammonia in his medicine-chest, or still better, eau de luce, which is a preparation of hartshorn, oil of amber, and spirits of wine, as the servants' bare feet are terribly liable to be found out by snakes and scorpions; and although in cases of a severe bite the only safety lies in *instantly* burning or cutting out the portion of flesh bitten (having previously stayed the flow of blood by the tightest possible ligature, for which purpose a supply of whipcord should be kept ready besides the ammonia), it is always well at once to administer stimulants freely, the best being half a teaspoonful of eau de luce, or forty drops of strong spirits of ammonia, in a little water; a dose which should be repeated frequently till the pain gradually passes down the suffering limb, and seems to be drawn out at the finger-tips or toes.

This is precisely the result produced by applying the snakestone, or horn. A piece of this was analyzed by Professor Faraday, who believed it to be "a piece of charred bone, which had been filled with blood several times, and then carefully

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charred again. It consisted almost entirely of phosphate of lime, and if broken, showed an organic structure with cells and tubes." I have been told of various cases of very severe bites, even those of the cobra, in which immediate application of this snake-stone has effected a cure. The Indians also have a kind of wood, which they call the root of the snake plant. They wave it close above the reptile, which seems to shrink down, cowed. This plant is the Aristolochia, which is much used in the West Indies as an antidote to the bite of serpents. It is said also to be fatal to all manner of snakes, and serpent-charmers stupefy their playthings with its juice. The difficulty must be to insert it into their mouths. It is like the simple operation of removing the poison sacs, which is easily performed "by making an incision beneath and behind each eye." But the question to ordinary mortals would be how to set about it! Certainly these snake-charmers are a race by themselves. Their power is undoubtedly hereditary; and there can be no doubt that, like the Psylli of ancient Egypt, they have some mysterious influence over the most deadly and venomous foes of our species. There are most clearly proved instances in which enraged snakes have first been lulled by the music of these men; then allowed themselves to be played with; have shrank back in dismay if they were spat at; have lain for days curled up in their charmer's turban; and then, perhaps, broken loose, to try their fatal fangs on some less masterful spirit.

It is said that in some cases the snake-charmers have anointed their whole body with some decoction of herbs, hateful to the serpent, so that the very smell of their skin is repellant to them; and that men, not pretending to be professional, who had been thus prepared for action, have been seen deliberately taking up snakes and handling them, without receiving injury.

This herb is said to be the *mimosa octandra;* but whatever it may really be, its value, both as a cure and preventive, is said to be well known to the little Mungoose or Ichneumon, a plucky little animal resembling a large rat, which does not scruple to attack even large hooded snakes. Whenever in its battles with serpents it received a wound, it at once retreats,

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goes in search of the antidote, and, having found and devoured it, returns to the charge, and generally carries the day, seeming none the worse for its bite. Disbelievers in this charmed plant maintain that the true secret of the mungoose surviving his battles lies in the fact that the serpent gives many a bite without injecting venom, and that although the wounds inflicted may bleed freely, they are not poisoned. Experiments have been made to prove this, and the bites at first inflicted on the mungoose were proved to be mere scratches; but after a while, the cobra being provoked to inflict a really vicious bite, the poor little victim died within a few minutes. The experiments, however, seem to have been incomplete as the captive mungoose had, of course, no chance of seeking his antidote.

Many medical authorities assert that, when once the venom has been thoroughly and intentionally injected, its career through the whole system is so rapid that no antidote can be of much avail. Nevertheless, I have been assured by one, through whose hands hundreds of cases of snake-bite had passed, that he scarcely knew of one instance in which the spirits of ammonia had failed to work a complete cure, though the bites were often of the worst possible character.

You can fancy how much this element of possible danger adds to the fascination which the snake-charmers with their baskets of dread playthings always possess. The reptiles are, in truth, so beautiful, with their varied colouring, some grey, some brown, some yellow, some beautifully marked with bands of black and gold, and divers patterns; all gliding so silently in the sunlight, now raising their heads to watch with glittering eye the movements of their master, or, with sudden dart, springing at some unwary fly, as you might fancy their springing at and striking some nobler foe.

CHAPTER XI

SNAKE-CHARMERS OF HINDUSTAN

From Vol. I of "Modern India" by Henry H. Spry. In Two Volumes, London 1831.

WHILE on the subject of snakes, I am led to speak of the

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professed snake-charmers of Hindustan, whose extraordinary methods of proceeding, in the pursuit of their avocation, have rendered them obnoxious to great suspicion, public opinion being divided concerning the reality of their pretensions. As this singular question is by no means settled, it gives me great pleasure to be able to communicate some highly interesting information regarding these people, which I derived from personal observation.

While at Dum Dum, (near Calcutta) the hospital steward came to my residency one forenoon, to ask whether it would be agreeable for me to witness the performance of some Banares snake-catchers, who were in waiting. They had captured, he said, several snakes in his own garden, and now they wished to know if they should exhibit their performance to the Doctor Sahib. I confessed that I much doubted their possessing the power they professed, and so was another medical friend who happened to be in the house at the time. However, we thought it a good opportunity to satisfy ourselves upon a point which has been so much mooted, and we determined therefore on putting these fellows to the test. To set about it in the most skilful and cautious manner was our first point of consideration. The result of our conference was a determination, in spite of its being twelve o'clock and a scorching hot day, to take the professors away to a distant and uninhabited house, the grounds of which were overgrown with all sorts of rank weeds and brushwood, and there set them to work. The baskets of snakes which they had brought with them were left behind under the charge of a trusty servant.

On arriving at the spot the three men were made to untwine their waistcloths and turbans, in order that no deception might be practised on us in that way, it having been frequently asserted that they go into the jungles with these reptiles bound up in their garments.

The charmers were duly allotted. My friend undertook the guardianship of one, the apprentices and hospital steward kept watch over the second, while I took charge of the third. We then diverged in opposite directions: to have outwitted us all, would, I think, have required more ingenuity than even

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Benares snake-catchers possess. I conducted my man towards a large tank or pond over-grown with briars and weeds. He soon struck up a monotonous buzz on his gourd, moving cautiously and slowly along, while I kept close at his heels all the time. We had not advanced very far into the thick grass before we reached a large prickly bush, when the man suddenly darted his hand at something, but in an instant drew it back, and resumed his music with more energy than before. Presently he made a second dash with his hand into the long grass and weeds, and in a moment out came an enormous snake, which he flung into the clear open space in the rear. In doing this he all but threw it into my face. We immediately ran back after it, and had it secured. At the request of the man, I was induced to liberate it, in order that he might show us the influence of his musical hum.

In a few moments after the buzzing had commenced, the animal appeared to be perfectly fascinated, and began to raise and droop its head in accordance with the music. Having satisfied ourselves that the notes really produced this effect, we proceeded to the examination of our prize. It was, we found, a cobra de capello, and by means of a forked stick, pressed behind the head, I was able to separate the lips so as to examine the mouth. I found both the poison fangs perfect, and I felt convinced, beyond a doubt, that the snake had been fairly and legitimately caught by our professional retainer.

I should mention, that, at the moment of seizure, the charmer received a prick in one of his fingers, about which he showed the greatest solicitude; abandoning the snake which he had just captured, he bound a ligature round his finger as tightly as possible, and then applied an amulet or some other preservative which he took from a little tin box, that he carried about with him. No subsequent inconvenience appeared to be felt, and very probably it was merely a prick from one of the thorns of the bush near which we were standing. We next directed our steps to a dilapidated out-office. About this time the *Durwan*, or porter, belonging to the adjacent house, joined our party, and informed us that for several mornings past

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he had seen a large black snake, or *kala samph,* as he termed it, lying on the margin of the tank, for the purpose, he supposed, of waylaying the frogs. Our party now observed the strictest silence, and two of the men joined their humming strains together. Presently the glaring head of a snake of no small magnitude was seen peering through the mouth of a large hole in the wall, and as the music proceeded, he gradually drew forth his speckled form. The body having fairly emerged, precautions were taken to prevent a retreat, by securing the mouth of the hole, and in this manner a second snake was captured.

All those present decided that the animal now caught belonged to a harmless species, and the examination of the mouth confirmed the truth of this opinion. The charmers were very solicitous that we should spare the life of the snake, as they were anxious to add it to the collection already made, but we were deaf to their entreaties. These people profess to believe that should a snake be killed while they are engaged in their professional duties, their influence over these reptiles will ever afterwards be lessened; and consequently, before they commence the pursuit, they usually stipulate that their captives shall not be destroyed. Having succeeded so well at this spot, we conducted the party to the place on which labourers were at that time employed in the erection of the Female European Hospital.

There being a great many heaps of bricks and other rubbish scattered about, we thought that our efforts would not prove in vain, and this surmise was very speedily verified: the men had scarcely commenced their strains, before we were visited by no fewer than three of those reptiles, which emerged from their residence among the bricks. We had now been out exposed to the heat for some time, and the sun being exceedingly fierce, we were obliged to content ourselves with these exhibitions. Whatever judgment the reader may form, the proofs, which we obtained, were sufficient to convince every individual of the party that the snake-charmers really did possess, by means of their music, the power they professed, and

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that they were not the empirics which we had been accustomed to consider them. It is urged by many that these men hide their tame snakes about in different places before they apply for permission to perform. This may be true: and I have no doubt that sometimes they do impose in this way, but in the present instance I cannot believe that it could be the case. The places which we selected were at a distance, the sun was very high, and therefore they could scarcely have expected that European gentlemen would venture out; besides they proved themselves equally successful in places wide apart from each other. Can we then hesitate to give to these men the meed of credit which is their due? Before they took leave, they amused us by exhibiting specimens of the state of discipline to which they had brought their slippery companions. As many as six or eight would be permitted to crawl over their bodies at one time; and every now and then, one bolder than the rest would be seen to thrust his forked tongue between the lips of his exhibitor.

As a proof that these men do deal with *entire* snakes, and sometimes, unfortunately, lose their lives in their efforts to gain a livelihood, the following fact, recorded in an Indian paper, published in Calcutta, will suffice:—"Two men of the Kowra caste, named Modhoo and Seboo, came by their deaths from the bite of a cobra de capello, on the 19th of December. They were snake-catchers, and imagined they knew *mantras* which had the virtue of taming snakes. Whenever they caught a new one, they were in the habit of making the most of it by making a show of it for presents. They caught one lately, of the species called *gokhra*, and took it to the house of Baboo Kala-Chand Bose, and while playing with it (being rather drunk at the time, and therefore unable to manage it properly), they were both bitten by the venomous reptile. This was about two o'clock in the afternoon; they then went home, and one of them, Seboo, expired about dusk of evening. The other man was taken to the dispensary, but to no purpose—he died about eleven at night."

Of the influence which music exerts over snakes, and cer-

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tain other of the animal species, there can, I think, be no doubt. Evidence is not wanting to prove that harmony has ever exerted a powerful influence over the human mind. Many of the ancients speak of music as a remedy for every kind of malady. On the authority of Aulus Gellius we are told that Theophrastus and Democritus held the sound of the flute to be a specific for the bite of the viper; and Sir William Jones was assured by a credible witness, that two wild antelopes often used to come from the woods to the place where Sirajuddowalah entertained himself with concerts, and that they listened to the strains with the appearance of pleasure, "till the monster, in whose soul there was no music, shot one of them to display his archery."

Sir William Jones, in his paper on the Musical Modes of the Hindus, enters very fully into the subject of musical influence, and says,—"That any medical purpose may be fully answered by music I dare not assert; but after food, when the operations of digestion and absorption give so much employment to the vessels, that a temporary state of mental repose must be found, especially in hot climates, essential to health, it seems reasonable to believe that a few agreeable airs, either heard or played without effort, must have all the good effects of sleep, and none of its disadvantages; '*putting the soul in tune,*' as Milton says, for any subsequent exertion,—an experiment which has often been successfully made by myself. Of what I am going to add I cannot give equal evidence, but hardly know how to disbelieve the testimony of men who had no system of their own to support, and could have no interest in deceiving me.

"A learned Indian told me that he had frequently seen the most venomous and malignant snakes leave their holes upon hearing tunes on a flute, which, as he supposed gave them peculiar delight; and an intelligent Persian, who repeated his story again and again, and permitted me to write it down from his lips, declared he had more than once been present when a celebrated lutanist, *Mirza Mohammed*, surnamed the Nightingale, was playing to a large com-

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pany in a grove near Shiraz, when he distinctly saw the nightingales trying to vie with the musician,—sometimes warbling on the trees, sometimes fluttering from branch to branch, as if they wished to approach the instrument whence the melody proceeded, and at length dropping on the ground in a kind of ecstasy, from which they were soon raised, as he assured me, by a change of the mode."

CHAPTER XII

INDIAN JUGGLERS

From the "Oriental Annual", 1834, by The Rev. Hober Counter

At the village where we first halted, we were vastly amused by a party of itinerant jugglers, and, as I had frequently heard of their extraordinary physical capabilities and skill in legerdemain, I was glad to have the opportunity of witnessing both. As many of their tricks are well known, and most of them have been frequently described, I shall confine myself to a description of two of their performances, one an act of manual dexterity, the other, one of the most extraordinary juggles perhaps ever practised; as I believe they are not commonly known, and have certainly never been witnessed by Europeans, except by those who have visited India. After they had exhibited a number of their ordinary tricks, such as swallowing a sword, blowing fire from the mouth, throwing the balls, &c., which are common to the most unskilful among them; one of the party, a woman, young and beautifully formed, fixed on her head a fillet of a stiff, strong texture, to which were fastened, at equal distances, twenty pieces of string of equal lengths, with a common noose at the end of each. Under her arm she carried a basket, in which twenty fow'ls eggs were carefully deposited. Her basket, the fillet, and the nooses, were severally examined by my companions and myself—there was evidently no deception. It was broad daylight, the basket was of the simplest construc-

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tion, the eggs and strings were all manifestly what they were represented to be; nor, in fact, had the woman anything about her to aid deception, had she been disposed to practise it. She advanced alone and stood before us, within a few feet of where we were seated. She then began to move rapidly round upon a spot not more than eighteen inches in diameter, from which she never for an instant deviated, though, after a few moments, her rotation had become so exceedingly rapid as to render it all but painful to look at her. She absolutely spun round like a top.

When her body had reached its extreme point of acceleration, she quietly drew down one of the strings which had formed a horizontal circle round her, and put an egg into the noose; when this was secured, she jerked it back to its original position, still continuing her gyrations with undiminished velocity, and repeating the process until she had secured the whole twenty eggs in the nooses previously prepared to receive them. She projected them rapidly from her hand the moment she had secured them, until at length the whole were flying round her in one unbroken circular line. After the eggs had been thus strung, she continued her motion for full five minutes, without the least diminution of her velocity, to our undissembled astonishment; when, taking the strings one by one, she displaced the eggs from their respective nooses, laid them in her basket, and then in one instant stopped, without the movement of a limb, or even the vibration of a muscle, as if she had been suddenly fixed into marble. Her countenance was perfectly calm; she exhibited not the slightest distress from her extraordinary exertions, but received our applauses with an apparent modesty of demeanour which was no doubt rather the result of constitutional apathy than refinement of feeling, for these jugglers are generally among the most depraved of their caste. . . .

The next thing to which I alluded as intending to record, was an instance of visual illusion, as far as my experience and even my belief goes, unprecedented in the annals of jugglery.

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After the exhibition of the eggs, as just described, a stout, ferocious-looking fellow stepped forward, with a common wicker basket of the country, which he begged we would carefully examine. This we accordingly did; it was of the slighest texture, and admitted the light through a thousand apertures. Under this fragile covering he placed a child about eight years old, an interesting little girl, habited in the only grab which nature had provided for her, perfect of frame and elastic of limb—a model for a cherub, and scarcely darker than a child of southern France. When she was properly secured, the man, with a lowering aspect, asked her some question, which she instantly answered; and as the thing was done within a few feet from the spot on which we were seated, the voice appeared to come so distinctly from the basket, that I felt at once satisfied there was no deception. They held a conversation for some moments, when the juggler, almost with a scream of passion, threatened to kill her. There was a stern reality in the whole scene which was perfectly dismaying; it was acted to the life, but terrible to see and hear. The child was heard to beg for mercy, when the man seized a sword. placed his foot upon the frail wicker covering under which his supposed victim was so piteously supplicating his forbearance, and, to my absolute consternation and horror, plunged it throug, withdrawing it several times, and repeating the plunge with all the blind ferocity of an excited demon. By this time his countenance exhibited an expression fearfully indicative of the most frantic of human passions. The shrieks of the child were so real and distracting, that they almost curdled for a few moments the whole mass of my blood; my first impulse was to rush upon the monster and fell him to the earth; but he was armed, and I defenceless. I looked at my companions—they appeared to be pale and paralyzed with terror; and yet these feelings were somewhat neutralized by the consciousness that the man could not dare to commit a deliberate murder in the broad eye of day, and before so many witnesses; still the whole thing was appalling. The blood ran in streams from the basket; the child was heard to struggle under it; her groans

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fell horridly upon the ear; her struggles smote painfully upon the heart. The former were gradually subdued into a faint moan, and the latter into a slight rustling sound; we seemed to hear the last convulsive gasp which was to set her innocent soul free from the gored body, when, to our inexpressible astonishment and relief, after muttering a few cabalistic words, the juggler took up the basket; but no child was to be seen. The spot was indeed dyed with blood; but there were no mortal remains, and, after a few moments of undissembled wonder, we perceived the little object of our alarm coming towards us from among the crowd. She advanced and saluted, holding out her hand for our donations, which we bestowed with hearty good-will; she received them with a most graceful *salaam*, and the party left us, well satisfied with our more than expected gratuity. What rendered the deception the more extraordinary was, that the man stood aloof from the crowd during the whole performance, there was not a person within several feet of him.

CHAPTER XIII

WORSHIP OF THE "BHUTAS" OR MALEVOLENT FIENDS

From "The Adventure of Naufragus," written by himself, London 1827

It was in one of our shooting excursions about three in the afternoon, that we approached a square building in a glen, shaded by tamarind, cocoa, and pepel-trees, and well-night obscured from human observation: We were casually attracted to the spot in the pursuit of a wild peacock, which had eluded the range of our shot for some paces,—when a loud shout, echoing suddenly through the wood, riveted our attention. We found it came from one of the temples of Siva: we looked at the interior; in the middle of the yard, or compound, was an altar, on which a bleating ram, reeking with gore, its head nearly severed from the body, was in the agonies of death. The black agents, who were the principal actors in this scene,

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were nearly in a state of nudity, and being liberally sprinkled with the blood of their victim, bore the appearance of fiends in human shape; another terrific yell rended the air when the victim made its last struggle.—"Ah!" thought I, "this must be some remnant of the sacrifices of the ancients to the true God; and these people know not, or will not believe, that the 'great sacrifice' for all, has already been made." On turning, however, to a friend of mine for an explanation, he undeceived me—"They are not," said he "sacrificing to God, but to the devil, or malevolent fiends, for the purpose of averting their wrath, and the evil to come." Such an act of gross fatality as this in the nineteenth century, even in the glens of Hindoostan, appeared to me almost incredible.

We shall now see what is said by the Abbe Dubois on the subject of this mode of worship, and on the fanatics, or worshippers of *Bhutas*, or fiends, who practise it.—"All nations of the earth," he says, "civilized or barbarous, have acknowledged the existence of certain evil spirits, whose nature and constant employment it is to injure men in various ways. Revealed religion alone, gives just and rational views of the subject: superstition, on the other hand, engendered by fear, and nourished by ignorance, has conjured up a thousand absurd and ridiculous fables, on a subject so well suited. People, who have not surmounted their crude notions concerning the general dispensation of Providence, when they find themselves unable to discover the causes of the cross accidents, however common, which befall them in the ordinary course of nature, cannot help ascribing them to the agency of invisible and wicked beings, who delight in bringing upon men the various ills and miseries to which they are exposed. The next step is, *to seek to propitiate the fiend, by prayers, adoration, and sacrifice.* The worship of demons is universally established and practised among the Hindoos; they call them *Bhuta*, which also signifies *element*, as if the elements were, in fact nothing else but wicked spirits personified, from whose wrath and fury all the disturbances of nature arise. In many parts we meet temples, especially devoted to the worship of wicked

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spirits; there are districts also in which it almost exclusively predominates. Such is the long chain of mountains which extended on the west of Mysore, where the greater part of the inhabitants practise no other worship but that of the devil: every house, and each family, has its own particular *Bhuta,* who stands for its tutelary god, and to whom daily prayers, and propitiatory sacrifices, are offered. In those parts, the image of the demon is every where seen, represented in a hideous form and often by shapeless stone. The worship of the *Bhutas,* and the manner of conducting it, are explained in the fourth Veda of the Hindoos, called Atharva-Veda."

On our return, we were met by a *guru,* or priest, mounted on a bullock, which was decked out with bells, cowries,[1] and rings through its nose; round the neck of the *guru,* numerous rows of beads were suspended, reaching as far down as his brest, and which he was telling, with his forefinger and thumb, very earnestly as he passed us, muttering to himself at the same time, his *mantras,* or prayers. His appearance was altogether remarkable, and, in connection with surrounding objects, well calculated to leave a lasting impression on the mind.

MAGICIANS

But what especially attracted my observance, was the singular appearance of the magicians;—as also of the snake-charmers. I shall first speak of the former. The art of magic is systematically taught among the Hindoos, and the Brahmans give it a place in the table of their sciences; its mysteries are said to be developed in several of their books; but particularly in that of the four Vedas, which bears the name of *Atharva-Veda.* In Europe, the art of magic (so long as a belief in it subsisted) was understood to mean a compact entered into with evil spirits. In India, however, it is

[1] *Cowry, a small shell, used in many parts of India as money; eighty make one pun, and fifty or sixty puns, one rupee.*

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different; the practitioners receive their lessons from the masters of the art, or as they themselves style them their *gurus*.

The power is spposed to consist in drawing down evil, in providing antidotes against witchcraft, which they distribute to those who choose to consult them, such as enchanted beads, roots, plates of copper, with extraordinary figures, inexplicable words and characters engraved thereon, and likewise amulets, to serve as talismans from incantations of every kind; secret methods of inspiring love, and of curing, or controlling that passion, are professed to be understood by the magicians; also the secret of obtaining unbounded wealth, and wordly blessings: but the grand perfection of the art, is held to consist in the power of communicating enchantment to the arms used in war; and it is not uncommon for those who have weapons (supposed to be) charmed by magic, to bid difiance to wounds in battle. The power of a magician to destroy a besieging army, is another of the supposed prerogatives of magic; and it is well known that Tippoo, during his wars with the English, assembled the most celebrated magicians from distant parts of Asia, for the purpose of destroying the English army;. . .

The practitioners of the art are said to make use of the bones of certain animals, such as the elephant, black dog, tiger, black cat, or bear; also the bones of a man born on a Sunday, when it falls on the new moon, and of a woman born on a Friday; the foot bones of an European, of a Mohomedan, Pariah, and several others. They also make use of scorpions. But the most horrible characteristic of this pernicious art is, the sacrifice of *human victims*,[2] usually young girls, of the age

[2]*That human sacrificies have existed among the Hindoos, may be proved from a Hindoo book, said to be written under the direction of Siva, entitled the "Kalika-Purana," in which are detailed the mode, ceremonies, and advantages of sacrificing human victims to such gods as delight in them. The chief of these gods are, Bahria, Yama, Dharmaraja, Kali, and Mariama. The sacrifice is held in this book as a right inherent in princes; the object of the awful rite being to render the divini-*

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of twelve years; this they do not scruple to do whenever any urgent or particular effects are required to be produced.

The appearance of the magician I saw was quite in unison with his calling; he rode on a sorry-looking donkey; the cap he wore was blue, and of a conical shape; his neck and breast were literally covered with beads, and his fingers with silver rings. He was tall and thin, of a jet-black complexion: his large black eyes appeared ready to start out of their sockets, from the apparent effects of stupefying drugs, or intoxicating spirits Indeed, if ever human being was calculated, by his appearance, to convey to the mind the idea of a fiend, it certainly was this magician.

I first saw him in one of my rambles among the precincts of Handitollah, when I was attended only by my servant, who understood English well. Observing a crowd of Indians near the *bazar,* I ventured to approach them, which was no sooner observed by the by-standers, than they made way for myself and attendant. The magician was holding forth, in a loud and animated strain, with his face to the sun, and apparently addressing it; but, on seeing my servant, he suddenly changed his position, and ordered him to stand in the centre of a ring there was ready formed in the midst of them, and when there, to throw the cane he held in his hand on the ground. He immediately complied; but no sooner had he entered the circle, and thrown down his cane, than he exhibited every symptom of terror, and cried aloud that he was encompassed by a circle of fire, from which it was impossible for him to escape:—This lasted for the space of two minutes. The magician then advanced, muttering some unintelligible words, and told my servant to pick up his cane. He then appeared

ties more placable, and to obtain their favourable aid in battle. Happily, however, this horrid practice is now nearly, if not entirely, abolished, if the victims sacrificed in secret by the magicians, in their ceremonies, are excepted. One of the books of the sacred Veda, called "Atharva-Veda," which teaches the magical art, recognized this horrible ceremony.

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even more terrified than before, declaring he was in the midst of water, and should be drowned; indeed, his indications of terror were so excessive, that I expected every moment to see him faint, or lose his senses. The magician immediately pulled him out of the ring by the hand, and the astonished crowd separated. As for my servant, he departed hastily away, seemingly very glad, to escape, followed by myself and the magician.

For some weeks he continued to visit us daily, exhibiting unaccountable specimens of his art, which failed to make us proselytes to the belief of immediate supernatural agency, but certainly afforded a fund of amusement. The limits of this work will not admit of a description of them, but for the satisfaction of such readers as desire further information, I insert the following extract from the able author before quoted, with which I shall conclude the subject.—"But it is from rivals who exercise the same trade, that the magician has most to dread. These do what they can to counteract his projects, and to make the effects of his own wicked contrivances fall upon himself, by employing spells of still greater efficacy. This being the case, they bear a mortal hatred towards each other, or at least pretend to do so. When they meet, their mutual dislike breaks out into loud defiance, calling on those within their reach to decide as judges between them, and pronounce which of the two is the more skilful. The contest begins. The problem perhaps is, to lift a straw from the grounds, or a piece of money, without touching it. Both advance, but they stop one another's progress by flinging enchanted cinders, or by reciting *mantras*. They both feel at the same instant, an invisible but irresistible force, which repulses and drives them back. They again approach, redoubling their efforts. The sweat extends in drops; blood is discharged from their mouths. One of them, in the scramble, gets hold of the piece of money, or the straw, and he is clamorously proclaimed the victor.

"Sometimes one of the combatants is violently precipitated upon the ground by the force of the *mantras* of his

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antagonist. In this state he remains for a long while stretched at his whole length, breathless, and (as he makes it appear) deprived of sensation. At length he gets up, and affects to be very ill for several days.

"It will readily be supposed that I attribute such disputes and their consequences to a premeditated understanding between the quacks; but, through all India, the people are firmly persuaded that these processes result from magical secrets known only to the initiated few, who, by their means, produce such wonderful effects; and it must be owned, that effects are occasionally produced by them, of which it would not be easy to divine the cause".

SNAKE CHARMING

Early one morning I was called up to witness the feats of a snake-charmer, who had arrived with two baskets, carefully covered over, and filled with serpents of every kind. Loosely hung on his ancles was a variety of large hollow brass rings; they were cut in two breadthwise, and so constructed, that at each motion of his foot, the two sides striking against each other, produced a shrill noise, resembling the sound of a brass basin when struck with a hammer. He placed his baskets down, and playing a pipe, the sounds of which were both harsh and piercing, walked leisurely round the hall and bedrooms, looking into each crevice, or aperture, that presented itself in the apartments, with uncommon quickness. Suddenly he creeped cautiously towards a corner of one of the rooms, still playing his pipe, and with the quickness of lightning stretched his hand towards a capella we saw peeping out, as if listening to the music: a squeak, like to that of a rat, announced its capture, and it appeared entwined round the juggler's arms, while its head and fangs were grasped firmly between his finger and thumb. His thumb indeed was bloddy; but after applying some restorative medicine to the wound, he placed the serpent in his basket with the others. The Hindoos confidently believe that snakes are charmed by the sound of the pipe,—that there is no deception in the case. . . . I

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have heard many of my countrymen, who have resided twenty years and upwards among the Hindoos, declare their conviction that, "in many cases there was no deception whatever." Relative to the subject, I cannot omit quoting the following striking passages of Scripture, which would lead to the conclusion, that whatever doubts may arise, as to the existence of the art in modern times, there is strong reason to suppose it was recognised in the days of old: ..."They are as venomous as the poison of a serpent; even like the deaf adder that stoppeth her ears, which refuseth to hear the voice of the charmer, charm he never so wisely."—Psalm. lviii. 4. "For behold I will send serpents, cockatrices among you, which will not be charmed."—Jerem. viii. 17.

"Previous to this man's departure, he exhibited, at the particular request of my friend, the power he possessed over the reptiles, by making them "dance."

CHAPTER XIV

CHARMING SERPENTS

From "India Illustrated" by Linney Gilbert

To relate the many stories which are told by most oriental travellers of the seeming extraordinary power possessed by the Hindu jugglers for charming serpents, would occupy more space than we are disposed to devote, and require no ordinary extent of fallibility to believe. While all have marvelled, no one but Johnson has ever yet attempted to account for the ingenious deception. "The professed snake catchers in India," says that gentleman, "are a low caste of Hindus, wonderfully clever in catching snakes, as well as practising the art of legerdemain; they pretend to draw them from their holes by a song, and by an instrument somewhat resembling an Irish bag-pipe, on which they play a plaintive tune. The truth is, this is all done to deceive. If ever a snake comes out of a hole at the sound of their music you may be certain that it is a tame one trained to it, deprived of its teeth, and put there for the purpose, and this you

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may prove (as I have often done) by killing the snake and examining it, by which you will exasperate the man exceedingly." Notwithstanding this undoubted proof of the imposture of these fellows, still it is to be disputed that they evince extraordinary command over reptiles, particularly snakes, and of the *cobra-di-capilla* kind. These jugglers are always found to be particularly expert in catching the snakes. They are scarcely ever wrong in selecting a place in which the hole of the snake is to be found; digging into this, they seize the animal by the tail with the left hand, and draw the body through the other hand with extreme rapidity, till the finger and thumb are brought up to the head. The poisonous fangs are then removed, and the creature has to commence its mysterious course of instruction. This, says Johnson, is not always a harmless employment, and he relates the following instance of its peril. "A man exhibited one of his dancing *cobra-di-capillas* (hooded snakes) before a large party. A boy, about sixteen years old, was teasing the animal to make it bite him, when it actually did, and to some purpose, for in an hour after he died of the bite. The father of the boy was astonished, and protested it could not be from the bite, that the snake had no venomous teeth, and that he and the boy had often been bitten by it before, without any bad effect. On examining the snake it was found that the former fangs were replaced by new ones, not then far out of the jaw, but sufficient to bite the boy. The old man said that he never saw nor heard of such a circumstance before."

CHAPTER XV

SOME STRANGE CASES CITED

From "Thirty-five years in the East" by John Martin Honigberger, London, 1852.

It was in the year 1830 that I had returned to Lahore, after having visited the European continent and my native country. I enjoyed the pleasure, on my return, of being the com-

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panion of General Ventura, who was also hastening to India to resume his duties. On our voyage we had many conversations, among which, the events which had happened during my absence from Lahore underwent discussion. On that occasion, the General related to me an occurrence which at first I could scarcely believe, thinking it a pure invention or a mere joke; but I soon became persuaded that he was in earnest. I gave it here with the remark only, that after having arrived at Lahore, I heard it confirmed by other persons, in whose statements I could also place confidence.

Ranjeet Singh—thus runs the narative—was told that a *sant* or *fakir,* *living in the mountains, was able to keep himself in a state resembling death, and would allow himself to be even buried, without injuring or endangering his life, provided they would remove or release him from the grave after the expiration of a fixed time, he being in the possession of the means of resuscitating himself again. The Maharaja thought it impossible. To convince himself of the truth of the assertion, he ordered the *fakir* to be brought to Court, and caused him to undergo the experiment, assuring him that no precaution should be omitted to discover whether it was a deception. In consequence, the *fakir* in the presence of the Cour, placed himself in a complete state of asphyxia, having all the appearance of death.

In that state he was wrapped in the lines on which he was sitting, the seal of Ranjit Singh was stamped thereon, and it was placed in a chest, on which the Maharaja put a strong lock. The chest was buried in a garden, outside of the city, belonging to the minister, barley was sown on the ground, and the space enclosed with a wall and surrounded by sentinels. On the fortieth day, which was the time fixed for his exhumation. a great number of the authorities of the durbar, with General Ventura, and several Englishmen from the vicinity, one of them a medical man, went to the enclo-

**For short accounts of this Fakir (Sanyasi), see statements of eye-wituesses published on pages* 60-61.

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YOGI HARIDAS

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sure. The chest was brought up and opened, and the *fakir* was found in the same position as they had left him cold and stiff. A friend of mine told me that had I been present when they endeavoured to bring him to life, by applying warmth to the head, injecting air into his ears and mouth, and rubbing the whole of his body to promote circulation, &c., I should certainly not have had the slightest doubt of the reality of the performance. The minister, Raja Dhyan Singh, assured me, that he himself kept this *fakir* (whose name was Haridas) four months under the ground, when he was at Jammu in the mountains. On the day of his burial, he ordered his beard to be shaved, and at his exhumation his chin was as smooth as on the day of his interment; thus furnishing a complete proof of the powers of vitality having been suspended during that period. He likewise caused himself to be interred at Jesrota in the mountains, and at Amritsar, and also by the English in Hindusthan. In the *Calcutta Medical Journal* about 1835, there is a full description of the *fakir,* and we are there informed, that he preferred having the chest in which he was enclosed, suspended in the air, instead of its being buried beneath the earth, as he feared the possibility of his body being attacked by ants, whilst in that middle state between life and death. Having, however, refused to undergo another trial, several of the English people there doubted the truth of the story, and refused credence in so astonishing a power.[1] But it is quite certain that had there been any deception as regards the interment of the *fakir,* rendering his experiment easy of accomplishment, those engaged or associated with him, and to whom the task of restoring the vital energies was necessarily entrusted, would of necessity be acquainted with the mystery, and able, since

[1] *To corroborate the above, my readers can refer to General Ventura (Paris), and also to Colonel Sir C. M. Wade (London), who were present, and assisted at the restoration of the fakir, some accounts of whom have been published from the Colonel's statement.*

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his real decease, to emulate his example; that, however, is not the case. It appears, consequently, that the *fakir* was the only one then in possession of that ability; and as a further corroboration of this view of the case, I may mention that I myself inquired in the Punjab, in the mountains and valleys of Kashmir, and in other parts of India, and used every exertion to find a person possessed of this power, in order to bring him to Europe, or at least to Calcutta, but without success. Several Hindus told me that such *fakirs* set no value upon money; I replied to them however, that at all events they fully appreciated other worldly pleasures. They did not like to hear this statement, implying that the *fakir* was a debauchee. Several complaints had, however, been made of him, on which account Ranjit Singh intended to banish him from Lahore. He anticipated the intention, by eloping with a Katrany (woman of Hindu caste) to the mountains, where he died, and was burned according to the custom of the country. His elopement with this woman may serve as a proof (in contradiction to other statements) that he was neither an eunuch nor a hermaphrodite.

Doubtless, it is a difficult task, and not within the power of every one to acquire the skill necessary for the performance of this experiment, and those who do succeed must undergo a long and continual practice of preparatory measures. I was informed that such people have their *froenulum linguoe* cut and entirely loosened, and that they get their tongue prominent, drawing and lengthening it by means of rubbing it with butter mixed with some pellitory of Spain, in order that they may be able to lay back the tongue at the time they are about to stop respiration, so as to cover the orifice of the hinder part of the *fosses nasales*, and thus (with other means for the same purpose, which I shall mention) keep the air shut up in the body and head.[2] Novices, in try-

[2] *A similar process is explained in some of the Encyclopædias in the article on "Engastrimythe," or the machanism of the ventriloquists.*

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ing the experiment, shut their eyes, and press them with their fingers, as also the cavities of the ears and nostrils, because the natural warmth of the body might cause such an expansion of the enclosed gas as otherwise to produce, by the violence of its pressure, a rupture of some of those delicate organs not yet accustomed by practice to endure it. This, I am told, is especially the case with the eyes and the tympan of the ear. For the better acquisition of this power, they are accustomed to practise the holding of the breath for a long period. They swallow a small strip of linen, in order to cleanse the stomach, and by a tube draw a quantity of water through the anus into the intestines to rinse them. This is performed while sitting in a vessel filled with water to the height of the arm-pits. It is said that the *fakir* in question, a few days previous to his experiments, took some kind of purgative, and subsisted for several days on a coarse milk regimen. On the day of his burial, instead of food, he slowly swallowed, in the presence of the assembly, a rag of three fingers in breadth and thirty yards in length, and afterwards extracted it, for the purpose of removing all foreign matters from the stomach, having previously rinsed the bowels in the manner I have before mentioned. Ridiculous as this operation may appear to the reader, and as it appears, indeed, to me also, yet these artists must of necessity be complete masters of their body and its organism, and possess a more than ordinary power over the muscles. We are scarcely capable of swallowing a somewhat long piece of maccaroni if it is not well boiled and moistened with butter, &c., to render it palatable. It is probable, however, that they may have lost the sense of taste, and their neck-muscles may be relaxed to such a degree that the long linen strip does not meet with any risistance in the throat. These preparations being made, the *fakir* stopped all the natural openings in the body with plugs of aromatic wax, placed back his tongue in the manner I have before indicated, crossed his arms over his breast, and thus suffocated himself, in the presence of a multitude of spectators. On his exhumation, one of the first operations

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is to draw his tongue into its natural position; after this, a warm aromatic paste, made from pulse meal, is placed on his head, and air is injected into his lungs and also through the ears, from which the plugs are withdrawn. By this operation, the pellets in the nostrils are driven out with considerable force and noise, and this is considered the first symptom of his resuscitation. Friction is then stenuously applied all over the body, and at length he begins to breathe naturally, opens his eyes, and is gradually restored to consciousness. It is related that two hundred and fifty years ago, in the time of the Guru Arjun Singh, a *Jogi Fakir* was found in his tomb in a sitting posture, at Amritsar, and was restored to life. This *fakir* is reported to have been below the ground for one hundred years; and when he revived he related many circumstances connected with the times in which he had lived. Whether this tradition be true or false, it is impossible to say; but I am of opinion, that he who can pass four months below the ground without becoming a prey to corruption, may also remain there for one year. Granting this, it is impossible to fix a limit to the time during which a suspension of the vital functions may continue, without injury to their subsequent power.

However paradoxical or absurd this statement may appear, and however persuaded I may be that many a reader, believing himself to be a wise man, will smile at the relation, I cannot, nevertheless, avoid confessing freely, that I do not entirely reject all the details given respecting the circumstance, for as Haller observes: "In the interior of nature no mortal can penetrate; happy is he who knows a small part, even of its surface." We find much credence given to such phenomena in the most ancient traditions. Who will not remember the history of Epimenides of Creta, who, after a sleep of forty years in a grotto there, is reported to have again re-entered the world from which he had so long been separated? Who will not remember also the seven holy sleepers who, according to a Vatican manuscript, were concealed in a grotto near Ephesus, in order to escape the persecutions of

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the Christians, during the reign of the Emperor Decius; and who, 155 years subsequently, in the time of Theodosius I' returned to consciousness? But even rejecting these traditions, have we not also similar examples in the animal kingdom? Have not animals, especially toads, been detected in rocks, wherein, according to the calculations made, they had been enclosed for several centuries, in a state of sleep or torpor, and which animals, after having been brought into the air, have recovered their vitality; and it is not necessary to remind the naturalist of the fact, that many species of animals invariably pass the winter season in a kind of sleep, awaking in the spring with renewed and unimpared energies. Among recent cases, which demonstrate the great endurance of human life, is the following relation.—At Vienna, some years since, a Hungarian was, during a period of twelve months in a comatose state, and his jaw-bones were so firmly closed that it was impossible to open his mouth; the physicians were consequntly obliged to extract some of his teeth, in order to administer some remedies and broth, to preserve life; he nevertheless at last recovered.

In the *Philosophical Transactions*[3] for 1705 the history of a case is related, which supports what has been previously mentioned: "A man of about twenty-five years of age, living in the neighbourhood of Bath, fell suddenly asleep, and continued for nearly a month in that state. Two years afterwards, he was again in a similar condition: his jaw-bones closed themselves; he was unable to eat, but fell asleep, and continued to be deprived of sensation for seventeen weeks. This occurred at the time when barley was being sown, and when he again awoke it was quite ripe. In the month of August he again fell asleep. He was bled; stimulating remedies were employed; and every means of restoration were used which the medical skill of the period could suggest, but in vain; he did not awake until the month of November." In Plott's *Natural History of Oxfordshire*[4] a

[3] *Nov. and Dec., Vol. XVII., p.* 2,177.
[4] *c.8., sec. II. p.* 196. *published in* 1677.

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case is alluded to, which, not being generally known, I will quote here, it being another evidence of the length of time during which a person may exist without nourishment.

"Rebekah Smith, the servant maid of one Thomas White, of Minister Lovel, being above fifty years of age, and of a robust constitution, though she seldom ate flesh (it scarcely agreeing with her), after she came from the communion of Plam-Sunday, April 16, 1671, was taken with such a dryness in her throat, that she could not swallow her spittle, nor anything else to supply the demands of nature; and in this state she continued, without eating or drinking, to the amazement of all, for about *ten weeks,* viz., to to the 29th of June, being both St. Peter's and Witney fair day; by which time being brought very low her master made inquiry, and found out a person who gave him an amulet (for it was supposed she was bewitched) against this evil; after the application of this amulet, within two or three days' time (though I dare not suppose there was any connection between the medicine and the disease), she first drank a little water, then warm broths in small quantities at a time, and nothing else till Palm-Sunday again, twelve months after, when she began to eat bread and other food as she had formerly done; and the record states that she was then about the age of sixty, and still living in the same place, ready to testify to the truth of the matter; as were also Thomas White and his wife, who were the only other persons living in the house with her, and who would confidently assert (for they carefully observed), that they did not believe she ever took anything whatever in those *ten weeks'* time nor anything more than what is before mentioned until the expiration of the year."

The *London Medical and Physical Journal*[5] states that:

"An account of the sleeping woman of Dunnibald, near Montrose, was read by the Rev. James Brewster, at the Royal Society of Edinburgh. Her first sleeping fit lasted from the

[5]Vol. XX XV., p. 509.

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27th to the 30th of June, 1815. Next morning she again fell into a sleep which lasted seven days, without motion, food, or evacuation. At the end of this time, by moving her hand and pointing to her mouth, it was understood she wanted food, which was given to her; but she remained in her lathargic state till the 8th of August, six weeks in all, without appearing to be awake, except on the 30th of June," &c., &c. This case is well authenticated.

And in J. N. William's *Miscellaneous Works*,[6] he states that he had seen many, mostly Jews and other aliens, of a dark, swarthy complexion, sometimes lie six or eight weeks in the torpid insensible condition above described.

After this digression I will return to my own adventures, having first cited a case in which the remedy called *Mumiai* . . . proved very efficacious.

In the time of the Maharaja Sher Singh, it happened that an elephant, in spite of all the caution of the driver, and of the animal itself, during the darkness of the night, fell into a grave in traversing the ruins of old Lahore. Mrs. Van C—was thrown from her *howda*, and had two of her ribs broken by the fall. I may also mention that she was at that time in the ninth month of her pregnancy. I began my treatment with a copious bleeding from the arm, and afterwards administered to her one grain of *mumiai* daily, for three successive days, and ordered her to lay quietly on her back, so as not to disturb the bandage. On the fourth day, when I visited her, she endeavoured, but in vain, to make the cracking of the bones audible by moving from one side to the other, the union of the fracture was already effected by the *callus*, and a few days subsequently she was delivered of a fine healthy boy with much ease.

About the same time, under Sher Singh's administration, a *fakir* struck me from behind with a stone, whilst I was passing the bazaar at Lahore; I was told that he was insane, and had already behaved in the same rude manner to some

[6] *Published by A. Smith, M.D., p.* 339.

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sirdars. On this account I caused him to be imprisoned, placed a chain upon his legs, and had him taken to my powder-mill to work. I gave him good food, administered remedies, and prohibited him from smoking *churrus* or eating opium, to which habits he was previously addicted. Scarcely was he a few days in the mill when I was informed that he had been bitten by a serpent, and at once sent him some medicaments which I judged likely to prevent the ill effects of the venom. On the same afternoon I visited him, and found him in good spirits. I at first attributed the circumstance to the effect produced by the remedies I had sent, but was surprised on hearing that he had not taken them, he being of opinion that the venom of the serpent was incapable of affecting him, inasmuch as he had often been bitten by serpents without having sustained any injury. The serpent which wounded him on this occasion was a viper, which he had caught and retained in his possession, and he offered to allow himself to be bitten on the tongue, if I would consent to witness it. At that time, Dr. W. Jameson (superintendent of the botanical garden at Saharanpur) was on a visit to Lahore, and the Maharajah showed him great attention, which induced me to inform the Maharaja of the offer made by the *fakir,* and I requested him to relate the case to Dr. Jameson, as I felt sure he would be interested in it.

As for myself, I doubted the truth of the *fakir's* assertion, and was persuaded that no European physician would believe it. Accordingly, I was directed to present the *fakir* to the doctor, who was at that time stopping at Anarkali. To test the experiment, I took a fowl with me. The doctor smiled, when I related to him the particulars, and, as I expected, expressed his disbelief of the *fakir's* statement. However, the *fakir* put his hand over the pot in which the viper was contained, and he was immediately bitten; he afterwards held the fowl near the pot, which was also bitten; but the doctor still appeared to think there was some deception in the matter. I took the fowl home, and placed it

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beneath a basket, where I found it dead on the following morning; although the *fakir*, who was bitten first, was quite well. I then took him, and also the dead fowl, with me, to present them to the Maharaja; and having given him a full account of what had been done, informed him that both the *fakir* and the fowl had since been under my surveillance. At his request the *fakir* was presented to him. He was accompanied by a *mazdur* (workman), who had just caught a viper, which the *fakir* had put into the same pot in which the former had been and presented it for the inspection of the assembly. Maharaja Sher Singh asked him whether he would really allow himself to be bitten by venomous serpents, and whether it was true that he would not thereby sustain injury? The *fakir* answered in the affirmative, and offered to give immediate proof of it. He uncovered the pot, and was about to present his hand, but the Maharaja objected to the serpents which the *fakir* had brought with him, and said that he would order some to be procured. He handed to the *fakir* seven rupees, which he had just received as *nazarana* (present), but he immediately gave them to the *mazdur*, saying. "That is a gift of the son of a laundress," and departed. Sher Singh pretended not to have heard this insulting remark, although it was spoken so loud that every body noticed it; and I felt much annoyed, having been the cause of the introduction of the insolent *fakir*. I reprimanded him, and gave orders for his re-imprisonment as a lunatic. He had not yet given the Maharaja a proof of his assertion, and consequently had not deserved the reward of seven rupees. The bad consequences of his unruly tongue, however, did not fail to overtake him; I did not doubt that Sher Singh would very soon procure the serpents which he had ordered, and therefore gave instructions to the soldiers who accompanied the *fakir* to the mill, to bring him early in the morning to my abode, so that he might be at hand, in case the Maharaja should send for us The next morning the *fakir*, on his way to me, met with a friend of his, who inquired where he was going, and why he was fettered? He

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replied that he was bound to show to Sher Singh his ability, and at once, as if in bravado, untied the pot which contained his two vipers, and caused himself to be bitten by one of them. Scarcely had he advanced two steps, when he staggered and fell. But he summoned all his strength, and rose again, in order to proceed, but again fell; and not being able to rise a second time, a *charpai* (stretcher) was brought, to convey him from the bazār to my house. He was followed by a multitude of curious people, and I caused him to be taken into a neighbouring stable belonging to the *fakir* Chiraku-d din who went immediately to see the patient as he was then vomitting blood. Chiraku-d din was of opinion that he could never recover. and the injured *fakir* being a Brahmin, he wished me to send him to a *dharamsala,* in order to avoid the unpleasant consequences which might attend his death; but, on mentioning this intention to the patient, he preferred being conveyed to a friend of his, who was living at the tower called Shahburj, where he himself had previously resided; which was accordingly done. I gave him some remedies, and sent him away; but scarcely was he removed from the stable, when the *payahs* (armed attendants of the *durbar*) appeared, summoning me to present myself with the *fakir* to the *durbar.* I stated, that he had already received the reward of his insolence, and was not expected to recover; but Sher Singh, who was probably much annoyed at the eipthet, "son of a laundress," despatched several messengers, ordering me to bring him to the *durbar* on his bed; and I was obliged to obey. I arrived, however, too late, for the assembly had already left the *durbar,* and Sher Singh had departed from Hazaribagh to the interior of the fortress. On the same day, the *fakir* had a swelling on his knee, and diarrhœa but he soon recovered, and afterwards proved very useful to me, when I began to make my experiments with the serpents, which produced so many curious results, that I sacrificed upwards of two hundred fowls in less than six months. At that time poultry was remarkably cheap at Lahore, the English not having yet occupied that

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country, and four couple could be purchased for one rupee. The *fakir* really possessed the secret of preventing his blood being affected by the bites of venomous reptiles; and, having at length succeeded in obtaining his statement of it, I now present it to the public. The *fakir* was an arsenic-eater, and to this reason he ascribed the cause of his remaining unaffected by any serpent's venom. Perhaps he was right, because in India arsenic is an ingredient in various compositions which are recommended as remedies against the bite of serpents. He told me, that during his stay under my control, he could not procure the poison, and that that was the reason why the viper's bite affected him, which might possibly have been the case.

CHAPTER XIV

SOME CURIOUS FEATS

From "The Hunting Grounds of the World": First Series, Asia, by Levison, London 1865.

After speaking of the fascinations of the Indian Dance the writer observes:

During the nautch several curious feats requiring great suppleness of body were performed. For instance, a row of girls stood fronting us, standing with their feet about six inches apart, between which was placed a rupee, or a needle with the point upright; they then all bent backwards together, and introducing their hands between their feet, picked up the money with their standing position without having moved their feet. . . .

Just at this moment two jugglers entered the circle, during an interval between the dances; and one of them placed before him a large earthen jar, over the mouth of which a piece of skin was tightly stretched, so as to form a kind of drum, which he beat with two small sticks, keeping time to a curious monotonous song, in which he exhorted his companion to display the utmost of his talents, so as to amuse

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the noble gentlemen, if he did not wish to eat dirt and have his face blackened.

The other replied that, Fate helping him, he would receive great presents from the truly charitable gentlemen on account of the great feats he would perform; and, after having beaten his breasts and uttered sundry cabalistic incantations, he rummaged in a bag containing the implements of his profession, and produced a queer-shaped doll, which, when touched with his wand, appeared to utter curious squeaks and groans.

This he designated Ramasawmy from Madras, and he proceeded to inform us that it was by means of his aid that he was going to amuse us, for that he was a great *jadoo-wallah* (magician). I noticed, however, that, during the course of the performance, he (the doll) received several cuffs is some of the feats of skill did not succeed the first time.

The juggler then passed round a common-looking white stone for our inspection, and then gave it to a pretty little dancing girl who was sitting close to me. She closed her hand on it, and, after he had touched her with his wand, he told her to open it, and it was found full of white sand.

He then called a very black musician, and, removing his turban, made him sit down near him; then taking a pinch of the sand, rubbed it down his forehead, leaving a bright yellow mark. A second pinch produced a blue, a third a red, and so on, every pinch producing a different colour. He then told the girl to close her hand, which he again touched with his wand, and the sand was turned into a small live snake, which the little woman threw down with a loud cry, which awoke the Doctor, who had fallen asleep on his chair near me, and caused him to stretch his legs and arms, and rub his eyes for some time before he knew where he was. "Ugh! ugh! ugh!" he exclaimed, starting to his feet with a grunt of amazement," I must surely ha'been dreaming, for I thought that auld vixen of a bear was after me, and, ugh! but she was no just a cannie customer, coming tearing and rampaging after a puir body wi'her lugs in th'air, an'her

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jaws open like a bluid-thirsty cannibal, looking for a'the world as if she thought no more o' swallowing ane o' the faculty than a blue pill. Och, the varmint! but what can you expect when one o' the profession goes black-guarding about the country wi' a real gun in the company of the likes o' ye Irregulars? Ugh! ugh! ugh!

The juggler then caught the snake, and tapping it with his wand appeared to turn it into a stone again, which, after having passed round for examination, he swallowed. Then, stroking his stomach, he made us understand that this hard living did not agree with his constitution, but that, with the proceeds of the generosity of the *sahib log* (gentlemen), he hoped to live well in future, and not to be obliged to make such meals as he had done that morning, the nature and quality of which he proceeded to show us; for, striking his chin with his wand, and opening his mouth, he produced some pounds' weight of pebbles, followed up by a quantity of small shells, then long strings of paper of different colours and finishing off by ejecting a huge black scorpion all alive, round which he danced, testifying his joy, as he proceeded gravely to explain to us that this bold reptile having got into his stomach in some water which he had drank from a well on which the Evil Eye had fallen, he had no peace ever since, as it devoured all the food he put into his stomach, and prevented his appetite ever being satisfied.

He now handed round for our inspection a dry mango-stone, which he afterwards buried in the ground, muttering imprecations against all evil spirits as he did so, and pouring a little water over the spot, which he assured us came from the blessed Ganges.

He then produced a small stone image of the goddess *Bhawanee*, (Kalee), to which he prayed that he might live to eat of the fruit of the tree of which he had just planted the seed. Immediately afterwards he dug up the stone, and finding it in the same state as when he had buried it, pretended to be in a great rage, and commenced abusing the goddess in not very measured terms. . . His ire even led him

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to forget common politeness to the sex, for he struck her repeatedly with his wand, but finished off by promising to break cocoa-nuts in her name, provided she assisted him to please the gentlemen; and after having effected a reconciliation, he again dug up the seed and showed it to us, with little white germs growing out of one end.

He again buried it, and recommenced coaxing the image to assist him, promising to sacrifice a cock to her, provided she listened graciously to his prayer, then covering the spot with a basket, to prevent the influence of any evil spirit from interfering with the working of his spell; in the meantime he showed us some very clever sleight-of-hand tricks with cups and small cloth balls, something like thimble-rig.

When this was over he removed the basket and showed us a young mango-plant growing, it having put forward the two first leaves; and at our request he dug it up from the ground and showed us the roots with the stone still adhering to them. This he again planted and covered it over with the basket, after which he showed us some very clever juggling with knives and balls.

When he again uncovered the plant it was covered with blossom, which we examined carefully before the basket was replaced.

He then showed us a very interesting feat, in which there was really no deception. He made his comrade lie down on his back, and placed on his bare stomach a double betel-leaf; then, taking a sharp sword, he made a ferocious drawing cut, entirely dividing the leaf and making a line on the man's stomach, yet not dividing the skin. He then placed a lime on the palm of a man's hand, and cut it in two with a stroke, so that both halves fell on the ground, making a mark with the edge of the sword on the man's hand, yet not cutting the skin.

When this feat was ended he asked the Doctor to remove the basket, and when he did so, lo! and behold, the tree was bending from the weight of five fine mangoes, which were plucked and offered for our inspection.

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The performance was deservedly much applauded, but the operator was looked upon with much distrust and suspicion by the Indians, who imagined he did everything by supernatural agency; for when I cut the mango he presented to me and offered half of it to the little Moslem girl who sat at my feet, she actually shuddered as she put it away from her, begging me in the name of Allah not to eat any of it, as it could not be otherwise then bad, coming from such a source.

I however ate it, and found it very good, though I could not persuade any of the Indians to taste it.

The next trick was also exceedingly good, and merits description. He crouched down before the stone image of the goddes, and, making a most profound obeisance, thanked her for the favour he had found in the eyes of the honourable company then assembled, and declared himself her most humble votary from that moment; and in confirmation of which solemn vow he declared that he would immediately sacrifice his only daughter, and henceforward devote himself to her service. He told his intentions to a beautiful little girl, about six years old, who was sitting near, and she began to cry and struggle in a most natural manner; but he seized her, and, after stripping off all her jewels and upper clothing, and loosening her long black hair, which fell over her little naked breast and shoulders, deliberately bound her hands and feet, covering her with a thick black veil.

He then swept the ground, on which he sprinkled some of the holy Ganges water, and, laying her down, covered her with the basket he had used with the mango trick, spreading a white cloth over all. He then commenced a prayer to the goddess *Bhawanee,* prostrating himself before the stone image and invoking its aid, and finished by breaking a cocoanut as a sacrifice, and placing the pieces before it.

Then breaking out into a long, wild cry, he rolled his eyes, foamed at the mouth like a maniac, and seizing a double-edged sword plunged it into the centre of the cloth through the basket under which he had placed his child.

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repeating the stroke twice in different places. Dark streams of blood were seen running from underneath the cloth, the sword being also stained; and at each blow shrieks and groans appeared to rise from under the basket. For a moment all was still, and every face transfixed with horror at the supposed crime; loud murmurs were heard among the men, and cries of alarm arose among the females, who rushed wildly about, screaming and beating their breasts; then the juggler coolly made an obeisance to the idol, and lifting up the bloody cloth and basket, displayed to the excited spectators only the veil, pierced in three places, and the cord with which the child was bound. The child had vanished.

All were thunderstruck, and some of the bystanders seized the juggler and threatened him with their vengeance if he did not restore the child he had spirited away by magic. He shook them off, and bowing again to the image, called thrice the name of Chand Bibi, and the little girl came tripping in from somewhere outside the circle and embraced her father. Our applause was long and loud, and when the little maid went round with the plate, the numerous donations, placed upon it announced the satisfaction of all the spectators.

The old Doctor, who had been rubbing his eyes, and twisting himself uncomfortably in his chair for some time, now burst out into a dolorous grunt, and with a serio-comic expression of countenance exclaimed, "Ugh! ugh! ugh! Weel! weel! Dinna ye believe in the deil and a' his works noo, as yere catechism says? but I reckon that was no a part o' the bringing up o' the likes o' ye. But, oh! dear mon, was it no just a fearfu' sight? This chiel felt his e'en maist greeting, an' his temples bursting, when the auld heathen trec'd his gullie wi'sic a like thud into his sonsie little bairn as coolly as if he was opening a haggis, and she just felt as if she couldna thole it; for brimstane smelt strong, as the auld bleezin' hornie went down on his marrow-banes to the little ne'er-do-well stane kelpie; and whilst the carle was in that position this half-scared infant just peeped twice

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at his nether end so as to mak' sure there was no dark, ill-looking appendage attached or hid in the folds o' his cloth."

"It was a magnificent trick," said W——, "for though I knew what was to follow, having seen it before, and studiously watched every motion, I have not gained the slightest clue towards finding it out, and I cannot understand it at all."

"It was certainly an extraordinary deception," I replied, "but the mango trick puzzles me most. I have a shrewd suspicion that I know how the child vanished from under the basket, although I must confess that I did not see it move; but do you not remember that, when he struck the first blow through the cloth and drew out the sword reeking with blood, several women rushed frantically round with shrieks and cries of horror, causing some confusion: well, I imagine that at this time the child must have crept from under the basket, and slipped away concealed under the flowing drapery of a female accomplice. I remember I fancied the outrageous grief of one old Moslem woman was got up for the occasion to divert our attention, for I noticed that, although she was wailing and beating her breasts most vehemently, no tears fell, and she raised her hand and put a piece of betel-nut and a paun-leaf into her mouth, which action impressed me with the idea that she was a confederate, and that her grief was 'all my eye.' "

"It must have been as you say," says Jock. "if Sawbones' friend, 'Old Hornie,' did not play a part in the performance, which, in my eyes, at first bordered on the supernatural, I must confess."

The Juggler then withdrew, and the nautch continued until the grey of the morning, when our rising from our seats was the signal for the sports to cease, and the spectators to retire.

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APPENDIX

THE INDIAN ROPE TRICK

(By P. C. SORCAR)

Among the much-talked-of Indian conjuring tricks the Great Indian Rope Trick stands alone as the greatest of all. Many strange tales have been told of this weird mystery, which is supposed to be shown only in the mountain fastnesses of the Himalayas, or in obscure portions of India, visited by very few travellers. Is it an optical illusion or a reality? Whatever it is, well, since the 14th century till the present times it has been actually seen by persons whose varacity stands unquestioned. Maybe it is played out at present, and is shrouded in an almost impenetrable mystery, yet its authenticity is established by the accounts of eye-witnesses. The story and description of this feat vary, but the account of the trick as we have it from Will Goldston, the founder of the Magicians' Club, London, is as follows:

"The conjuror sits cross-legged in an open space. He throws one end of a coil of rope into the air, and about fifteen feet (sometimes 20 or 25 feet) remains stiff like a pole. A little boy climbs up the rope, and balances himself at the extremity. At a word from the conjuror, he entirely vanishes and is discovered in a basket, or comes running into the crowd from a distant spot. Then at signal the rope crumbles to the ground." (Page 287, *Great Tricks Revealed*).

There is an account of this trick in the volume of travels written by the famous traveller Ibn Batutah (1304-68) (Abu Abrullah Mahammad of Tanjiers), an Arab or Morish Sheik, who journeyed through the East in the first part of the fourteenth century. He saw it in an entertainment at Hangchow in China. "One of the Khan's jugglers" he says, "took a wooden sphere in which there were long holes and threw it up into the air till it went out of sight, as I myself witnessed,

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while the strap remained in his hand. He then commanded one of his disciples to take hold of and ascend by this strap, which he did until he also went out of sight. His master then called him three times but no answer came. He then took a knife in his hand, apparently in anger, laid hold of the strap and vanished. He then threw one hand of the boy upon the ground, then his body, then his other hand, then his feet and lastly, his head, all cut and separated from one another. He then came down, panting for breath with clothes stained with blood. . . The juggler then took the limbs of the boy and applied them one to another, he then stamped upon them and the boy then stood up alive and erect. . . "

"All this astonished me beyond measure and I had an attack of palpitation like that which overcame me once before in the presence of the Sultan of India, when he showed me something of the same kind."

Next reference of the trick we find in an article from the pen of S. W. Clarke in the *Magic Wand* (a leading conjurers' journal). Clarke saw the trick two centuries later, at Magdeburg, in Germany, where a magician "would throw a cord up in the air, when a little horse would climb it, himself taking hold of the horse's tail would follow him. . . . ."

Then comes the description of the Rope Trick in India in the beginning of the seventeenth century, at Delhi, performed by a Bengalee magician before the Emperor Jehangir. We get an account of it in the *Memoirs of the Emperor Jehangir* written by himself and translated from a Persian manuscript by Major David Price, a Member of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland.

In China either in the end of the seventeenth or the beginning of the eighteenth century, Pu Singh "gave an account of the rope trick, in which the performer took a long cord and threw it into the air, where it was caught by something or somebody and pulled up till the end disappeared. The performer's boy ran swiftly up the rope and disappeared in the clouds. . . It was claimed that this trick belonged to the white Lily Sect that flourished in China in about 1350 A.D."

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We now come right to the end of the nineteenth century. A witness writes in the *Times of India* (19-4-34): "The Rope Trick is no myth. I have seen it done several times in Georgetown (previously called Black Town), Madras, in Oil-monger Street. I was a boy then (in 1892) and we saw the trick. . . "

In the year (1895-96) Ghulam Mohammad Munshi, a Barrister of Rajkot who had seen this trick in Bombay, while he was staying there in the Great Western Hotel, Fort, says: "The last trick I saw was the rope trick. He threw up a ball of thin thread. The thread stood perpendicularly without any support from the top or sides. I saw the thread hanging straight up. Then the boy who was with him went up the thread. As he went up he was speaking loudly to the conjurer. His voice became less in pitch as he went up higher. In a few minutes it was inaudible. Then the conjurer showed his anxiety about the whereabouts of the body. In a few minutes there was a noise as if something had fallen from above. This noise was repeated three or four times. During these incidents, the conjuror declared that what had fallen from above were parts of the body of the boy. Then he covered these parts with his basket, and chanted some *mantras* and then the boy emerged from the basket hale and hearty and *salamed* the spectators in the usual manner! As it was 10 a.m. there were not many spectators."

Mr. G. Annaji Rao of Bombay says: ". . . . . The Rope Trick was seen by me in the early nineties at Coondapoor in South Canara in the compound now occupied by Mr. Sankanaraina Udpa, an Advocate. It was then occupied by Mr. K. Krishna Rao, who was then the District Munsiff."

". . . The ball of rope ascended the clear sky until it was lost to view. . . The boy caught hold of that slender rope and climbed it up like a monkey. The boy climbed up until he was lost to sight. Then the rope was drawn in. . . "

In the *Morning Post*, London, Sir Ralph Pearson, formerly Lieutenant Governor of the North West Frontier Province, claims to have seen the trick at Dondachia station on

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the then recently constructed Tapti Valley Railway in the west Khandesh District of the Bombay Presidency. This was in the spring of 1900. The writer describes how he happened to look out of his compartment window on hearing a man shouting and saw the usual village juggler.

"After the necessary shouting and beating of his legs and chest, he threw up a rope some ten feet in the air, after which a boy swarmed to nearly the top.." Sir Ralph Pearson remarks, however, in his letter that another man then shouted down the platform and beat a drum which made him look round. On turning back again he found the boy on the ground as also the rope. The only other details he recalls about it were that the rope was frayed at the top and when in the air, was by no means taut, even when the boy was climbing it up. He mentions that his wife told him also some time later that she had seen the trick done at another wayside station further down the same line.

Mr. V. Rebiers of Kirkee has also an interesting account: ". . . I did see the rope trick performed in the Portuguese Territory of Damann near Bombay. . . . I watched the performance carefully and saw a fairly thin rope thrown up; the lid of an oblong basket lying near was then thrown open and a boy of about 10 or 12 darted from the basket up the rope and disappeared. . . ."

Again we have from the *Morning Post* of 26-1-32 that Mrs. Pennel Williamson had seen this trick performed in the year 1907-8 at Mussourie.

In the *Times of India* (30.4.34) we find "Peeler" writes from Bangalore: ". . . .I saw this trick performed in 1912 on the Police Parade ground at Malappuram, Malabar, in the presence of some of the constabulary. The trick was performed by two itinerant jugglers and a boy of about 6 years of age. A rope of about half inch in thickness and 30 feet in length was thrown up in the air by one of the men. It stood straight up and the boy was then called on and told to climb the rope, which he did and disappeared after reaching the top, the rope falling to the ground."

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"After a lapse of about 15 minutes one of the jugglers called on the boy to appear and I saw him coming from a nullah about two furlongs away. . . The trick was performed in my presence and I can take my oath on it."

From the *Daily Telegraph* (16.6.32) we learn that Mr. Prowse saw the trick performed in Secunderabad in 1915. His wife Mrs. Prowse had also seen the same trick done in Ceylon years before.

Mr. K. Mahadevam writes from Bombay: "The Rope Trick is no myth. Several people in Malabar have seen this trick performed. When I was a student in the Brenen College, Tellicherry (North Malabar District) about 20 years ago, I had seen this trick performed in an open maidan."

Arthur Young writes from Kalhapur on 21-4-34: ". . . I have myself seen this trick performed in Assam. . . ."

Colonel H. Cornes saw the trick performed in a Bombay bazar.

From S. H. O'Grady's *Sylva Gadelica* (Page 321) we learn that the trick was known to old Ireland. The conjuror, we are told, took out of his bag a silken thread, and so projected it upwards that it stuck fast in a certain cloud of air. Out of the same receptacle he pulled a hare that ran away up along the thread. . . . From another bag he extracted a winsome young woman, at all points adorned; he instructed her to follow. . . .

The following extract from a paper on Maxim Gorki, by Prof. Nicholas Roerich, published in the *Twentieth Century*, and reproduced in *The Statesman*, Calcutta, on October 5, 1936, is very interesting:

" . . . I also recollect how once at a friendly gathering Gorki revealed, quite unexpectedly for many, another interesting side of his character. We spoke about *yogis* and various psychic phenomena whose home is in India. Some of the guests suspiciously looked at Gorki who kept silent and they apparently awaited his severe criticism. But his resume amazed many."

Kindled with an inner radiance he said: "The Hindus

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are a great people. I will tell you of my personal experience. Once in the Caucasus I met a Hindu about whom many remarkable stories were circulating. At that time I was rather inclined to doubt. At last we met and what I will tell you I saw with my own eyes. He took a long thread and threw it up into the air. And to my surprise it remained hanging up in the air. Then he asked me whether I would like to see pictures of Indian cities. He gave me his album and looking at me said: 'Please look at these pictures of Indian cities.' The album contained polished brass sheets on which were reproduced beautiful views of different cities, temples and other views of India. I looked over the entire album, alternatively studying the pictures. Then I closed the album and returned it to the Hindu. He smiled and said: "Well, you have seen views of India": then he blew at the album and returned it into my hand inviting me to look at it again. I opened the album and to my surprise found only polished plates without any pictures whatsoever. These Hindus are indeed remarkable people."

So Gorki was a witness to the much-talked of Rope Trick or at last a part of the famous trick. The account of his brass album, as given by Maxim Gorki, is no less interesting because I doubt whether magicians of Europe and America can ever do it!

The Times of India, (19th May 1934) states: "A man who has actually seen the Indian Rope Trick performed has at last been found. He is Dr. Alexander Cannon, a psychiatrist, who described his experience in Indo-China at a London meeting of the British College of Psychic Science. Dr. Cannon says he was accompanied by a member of the French Consulate in Indo-China: "This is what we saw or thought we saw," said Dr. Cannon. "The scene is a marketplace. In the centre stands an ascetic, his eyes half open. He stands swaying his arms, gesticulating and uttering *yogic* incantations, meanwhile swaying gently to rhythm. In fornt of him is a coil of red-coloured rope lying on the ground. Over this he stretches out his hands periodically. On his right-hand side

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stands a youth who has a most noticeable far-away expression in his eyes. At last the ascetic lifts up the end of the red rope and holds it at arm's length. The end of the rope then appears to rise higher and higher as if drawn heavenwards by an invisible force. This process continues until the other end of the rope is just free of the ground. The boy then climbs the rope remaining at the other end in mid-air. He comes down to the ground and then again climbs the rope and the *yogi* appears to follow him up the rope with a knife clenched in his teeth. He gets hold of the boy, cuts him to pieces and appears to drop the different parts of the body to the ground where they lie quivering in the dust. The magician then descends the rope, puts the pieces of the body together and sends the youth up the rope again right to the top when he appears to have vanished in the thin air."

Dr. Alexander Cannon, K.C.A., M.D., Ph.D., M.A., an official of the London County Council Mental Hospital Service, says that he has actually seen the Rope Trick performed and can himself do it. "I can produce the Rope Trick in the Albert Hall, London. . . I shall require a large quantity of sand from a certain area, certain lighting, as it were from the sun, certain heating arrangements, and, under these circumstances, everyone can see the phenomenon."

A number of magicians in England wanted to see the trick and expressed their willingness to help him in procuring the right conditions at the Albert Hall. To this offer, Dr. Alexander Cannon said: "Provided you are willing to lay down enough money to bring over a shipload of special sand, to heat up the Albert Hall to tropical temperature, and to produce my own tropical lighting—and also to place with a bank £50,000 to be handed over to me as soon as I have produced the phenomenon, I will do it."

After this the matter was dropped. I reproduced a paragraph from Dr. Cannon's book, *The Invisible Influence*, from which some sort of explanation of the Indian Rope Trick may be gathered. Describing the six orders of hypnotic degree he writes: "One of the six orders is a sect that per-

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forms the lower kind of hypnotic work, namely, the theatrical, where they hypnotise the whole audience collectively and exhibit the Rope Trick. The 'faqir' stands on the stage or in their midst with a red rope in his hand and throws it above his head with the audible suggestion that he will climb it up and disappear. This act has been seen and vouched for more than a thousand times. Photography is our own proof that the whole thing is a mere visual hallucination, if it is so, because the camera records no such feat. It is an extremely difficult effect to produce in the West as in the hot climates the cortex of the brain is much more passive and the unconscious mind easier to deal with."

The *Bombay chronicle* dated 29th July '34 stated that a Canadian had taken up the Rope Trick challenge: William Von Arrenscroff, a professional magician of Montreal, would do the trick any day, he said, and to that end he would sail for England with his wife and family and his assistant, so confident is he of complete success, says J. M. Eyffe in the *Montreal Gazette*. He has been studying the famed Rope Trick for years. He believes that the reason why it is so seldom seen in India is that it is seldom performed. He believes that the Indian Rope Trick is compounded of both illusion and hallucination, up to a point it is hypnotism and beyond that it is trickery.

Among others who claim to have solved the Rope Trick the name of "Karachi" deserves mention.* In the *Listener* (London) of 30th January, 1935, "Karachi" states: "The secret of this trick I learnt many years ago from a Gurkha warrior, whose life I had been the means of saving. On his death-bed shortly after, he imparted to me the secret of this trick, at the same time adding his dying injunction that I should not perform it in public for profit except when driven to it by necessity. It is for this reason that the trick has not been performed

*'Karachi' is not an Indian. It is the stage name of Arthur Claude Derby of Plymouth, his son's stage name being "Kyder." See picture facing page 114.

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for so many years, but now the time has come when I find it necessary to demonstrate its reality and convince a sceptical world that the secrets of the East have not entirely perished.

Colonel Elliot throwing out a challenge on behalf of the Occult Committee of the Magic Circle says: "We have searched far and wide for a performer of the Trick and have offered five hundred guineas to anyone who can perform it." These gentlemen have never contacted Karachi who will take up their challenge. (Incidentally, I have already published one challenge in the *World's Fair* about eighteen months ago, under my former professional name "Phantom," to which no response has yet been given). "If the members of the Occult Committee are in earnest," says Karachi "let them offer a reward of not five hundred, but of two hundred guineas only, and I will perform the first part of the Rope Trick to their satisfaction upon the following terms: (1) the sum is to be deposited with a neutral party, who is to decide whether I have performed the trick satisfactorily or not; (2) the rope is to rise through my hands while I am in a sitting posture to a height of ten feet from the carpet on which I sit. It is to remain there erect while my son Kyder climbs up it, and remains with his hands at the top for at least thirty seconds while he can be photographed; (3) the rope shall be an ordinary thick rope with a good grip, which shall be supplied by any well-known rope manufacturer on a specification as to length and grith which shall be agreed between myself and Colonel Elliot or his Committee; (4) the place shall be any open place chosen by the neutral party, provided that its conditions are not dissimilar to those which obtain in India. This trick ought to be performed as far as possible under neutral Indian conditions. The neutral judge or judges should be satisfied that these conditions are fair to me. Furthermore, I am to be allowed access to this place for at least forty-eight hours previous to the performance, and during that access I must not be spied upon. This is in accord with what the Indians do, for they always perform the trick on native ground, and never in the white

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man's private enclosure; (5) the rope shall be handed over to me after examination at the commencement of the performance. The spectators shall be anywhere in fornt of my carpet at a distance of not less than 15 yards."

"I will add that I am able to perform all my Rope Tricks on a table which can be examined beforehand. This disposes of the suggestion of bamboos, canes, telescopic rods etc. Now, these are fair conditions and if the Magic Circle is really seeking enlightenment it will accept my challenge and this much-disputed tradition will become a reality."

Horace Goldin, the President of London Magicians' Club, states that he had not only seen the trick but he had actually learnt it during his professional tour of India and the Far East. Horace Goldin has sent me one of his printed booklets in which he has frankly confessed that he is "the only white man in the world to discover the secret." The booklet states: "The illusion known throughout the world as 'The Indian Rope Trick' so called from its supposed Hindoo origin, is one of the oldest tricks known to the profession of conjuring. Marvellous tales have come out of the hills of India, borne by returning occidentals, tales of *yogis,* who could make a rope rise in the air, and before the eyes of the fascinated watcher make a little Indian boy climb the rope until lost to view." For years Horace Goldin had heard these stories of the wonderful Rope Trick. For years he pondered over the possibilities of it. Then, being of a keenly searching temperament, Mr. Goldin visited India to investigate this trick for himself. He found that the Indian method consisted chiefly of a sort of hypnotism, but a hypnotism imposed on the audience by itself. Goldin could not find a reliable witness who had ever seen the trick accomplished. He could never find an Indian conjurer who would do the trick for him. He travelled far into the hills, visited localities where white men had never been, but nowhere could he witness this marvel. He was disappointed. If he came out to India unable to do the trick, the occidental mind would have to admit that it was foiled by the oriental. However, Goldin is the very last man in the

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world to admit defeat in anything he attempts, and so for eighteen long years he searched and investigated following up clues here and there, and sparing no expense in trying to trace either the origin of the theory of the trick or an actual performer, and at long last his efforts were rewarded when he obtained a clue from one of the disciples of *a yogi* in Rangoon.

"It has been the dream of my life to perform this trick," said Mr. Goldin, "and I have spent more than £1,000 to perfect it. When I was in Rangoon in 1919 I came across a *Yogi* who made a practice of hanging head downwards from a tree for days on end. It came to my knowledge that this *Yogi* was a master of the Indian Rope Trick which was performed as a sacred and secret religious rite. I went to see the *Yogi* and spoke to him, but he made no reply. Immediately several disciples surrounded me. They produced daggers and made me understand that to speak to the *Yogi* might mean death. I had to retreat gracefully, but I was determined to gain the secret. I got into conversation later with one of his disciples whom I bribed with some money. He was reluctant to speak of the feat, but he inadvertently slipped a remark which gave me the original clue to the secret. Since that day I have been experimenting and at last I can perform the trick to my satisfaction."

I have a press clipping from the *Daily Sketch,* dated October 21, 1936, which states: "Indian Rope Trick Done At Last. At last the Indian Rope Trick, which has been described by countless retired Anglo-Indians to sceptical English listeners, has been done in England by Horace Goldin, President of the Magicians' Club. He took up the offer of the Magic Circle of £500 to anyone who could prove that the trick could be done and made a bid for an offer of £1,000 by Bertram Mills of Circus fame, at Penge Empire, with apparent success. There was a little Indian boy at the top. Goldin sounded a gong. The boy just vanished."

There are a number of other records of the Rope Trick, in China, in India, and even in Europe, where, according to Vier's *De Prestiglis Demonium* (published in 1566), it was

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shown in its second form at Magdegurg in Gemany. The first Englishman to witness and record it, so far as we know, was John Melton, a sailor who visited the Dutch East Indies about 1670; he records that he saw the trick performed by Chinese jugglers at Batavia.

In modern times the most interesting proofs of it contained in a long correspondence in the London *Daily Mail* which began on 8th January 1910. A sergeant of the East Survey Regiment wrote to say that in 1915, he and some twenty fellow soldiers saw the trick, in its simplest form, performed by an Indian juggler at Ferozpur. He asked for an explanation. Other letters poured in thick and fast from reputable and reliable witnesses.

One lady had seen the trick near Colombo, in company with her mother, her brother, and five other people. And a young lieutenant—Lieutenant F. W. Holmes, V. C., of the Yorkshire Regiment— had not only witnessed the first form of the trick at Kirkee, but had actually photographed it. The photograph appeared in the *Daily Mail* of 26th April, 1915, and showed the rope standing up in the air, about fifteen feet high, slightly bowed, with the boy balanced at the top.

A similar correspondence, with equally reputable and conclusive personal testimony, may be found in the *Daily Telegraph* of May and June, 1934.

Below is given the evidence of three Europeans, all of whom have actually seen the trick with their own eyes. Writing in *The Daily Mail,* London, about 30 years ago Lady Wagllhorn bore testimony to the genuineness of the rope trick. "In 1892," she wrote, "I was living in an isolated place in the Madras Presidency in India, when one day the servant came to ask if I would like to see a Indian conjurer who was walking on his way to Calcutta.

"After doing, uncommonly well, certain tricks which I had seen before, he concluded with the rope trick.

"Watching from the plinth of the bungalow, about 3 feet above the garden and about 15 feet from the magician, I saw a fairly stout rope thrown up about 11 or 12 feet into the air.

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It became rigid, and a boy of about twelve climbed up and vanished at the top. A few minutes later he reappeared in the branches of a mango-tree in the garden 100 yards away.

"Besides the servants beloging to the compound only one other person was with me at the time, but we both saw exactly the same thing. What, I wonder, is the explanation!"

The second testimony was given to a Calcutta journalist, A. Claude Brown, late editor of *The Empress*, Calcutta,* by a Dutchman living in Calcutta. On the *maidan* opposite the Chowringhee the Dutchman saw an Indian was showing his audience a basket, a boy, and a piece of rope coiled inside the basket. His experience was very similar to that described by Lady Waghorn, save only that after the boy had apparently ascended the rigid rope the conjurer himself ran up the rope and shouted to the boy to come down. There was no reply, so the conjurer in his rage whipped out a knife and lashed it wildly above the head. When he slid down the rope the knife in his hand was dripping with what appeared to be blood. The man coolly dug the blade into the ground and cleansed it, while the horrified onlookers shouted that he had murdered the boy. But the boy suddenly appeared, forcing his way to the centre from the outskirts of the crowd. The amazed audience paid cheerful tribute in silver to the skill of the illusionist. The Dutchman was frankly confounded by the whole procedure.

Colonel Barnard, at one time Commissioner of Police, Calcutta, saw the rope trick performed in the backyard of an Indian house in Calcutta. He asked another police officer to accompany him, and managed to take unobserved a small Kodak also. The Colonel managed to secure several capital snapshots of the proceedings. He saw the conjurer, the boy and a long flexible rope which was uncoiled by the juggler. A jerk of the wrist and the rope shoots up into the air, to remain rigidly suspended in space, immobile, vertical. The

**See "The Ordinary Man's India" by A. Claude Brown, London, 1927.*

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juggler's assistant, a small boy runs forward, nimbly shins up the miraculously suspended rope, precariously balances himself on his head on the thin vertical column of coir, then vanishes into the air above, and suddenly reappearing a few moments later from among the congregated on-lookers.

The Colonel was frankly amazed, but when he developed those negatives he found that the camera had not seen as much as its master. There was the boy and the conjurer, but the rope was on the ground at the very moment when the Colonel had seen it in the air. And the boy also was on the ground—shown clearly on each negative. According to the Colonel the whole affair was an optical illusion.

THE END

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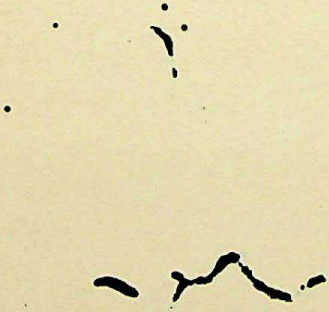

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